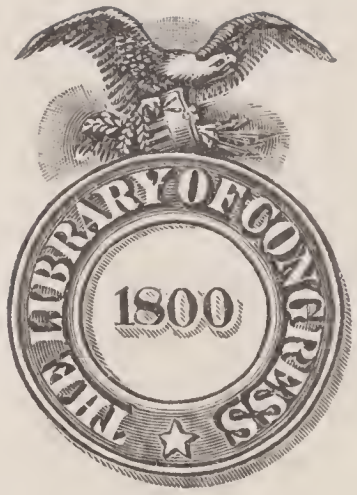


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SOME WOMEN AND A MAN

SOME WOMEN AND A MAN

A COMEDY OF CONTRASTS

BY

WILLIAM J. LOCKE

AUTHOR OF

"At the Gate of Samaria," "The Demagogue and Lady Phayre," Etc.

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NEW YORK

1896

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CHAPTER I.

THE LONE WOMEN.

FELICIA GRAVES was puzzled. The six weeks she had spent at the Pension Boccard had confused many of her conceptions and brought things before her judgment for which her standards were inadequate. Not that a girl who had passed the few years of her young womanhood in the bubbling life of a garrison town could be as unsophisticated as village innocence in the play; but her fresh, virginal experience had been limited to what was seemly, orthodox, and comfortable. She was shrewd enough in the appreciation of superficial vanities, rightly esteeming their value as permanent elements; but the baser follies of human nature had not been reached by her young

eyes. Her whole philosophy of life had been bound up in well-ordered family systems, in which the men were honest and well-bred, and the women either comfortable matrons or fresh-minded, companionable girls like herself. She knew vaguely that sorrows and bitterness and broken lives existed in the world, but hitherto she had never reckoned upon coming into contact with them. They all lay in the dim sphere where crime and immorality held sway, whose internal upheavals affected her as little as dynastic commotions in China. The lives and habits and opinions therefore of the six lonely women who, with one old gentleman, formed her sole daily companions in the Pension Boccard, were a subject of much puzzled and half-frightened speculation on the part of the young English girl.

She was forced to speculate, not only because she was brought into intimate touch with the unfamiliar, but also because there was little else to do. The Pension Boccard was neither gay nor stimulating in winter. Its life was dependent, first upon the ever-changing current of guests, and secondly

upon such public distractions as Geneva offers. In the summer it was bright enough. The house was full from top to bottom with eager, laughing holiday-makers, bringing with them the vitality and freshness of the outside world. There were dances, flirtations, picnics. New ideas, scraps of gossip and song from London, Paris, St. Petersburg filled dining-room and salons. The pleasant friction of nationalities alone was stimulating. The town, too, was gay. The streets were bright with the cosmopolitan crowd of pleasure-seekers, the *cafés* alive with customers, the shop windows gay with jewellery and quaint curios to dazzle the eyes of the reckless tourist. At the Kursaal were weekly balls, entertainments, *petits chevaux*. Bands played in the public gardens, and all the *cafés* offered evening concerts gratis to their customers. There were pleasant trips to be made on the lake to Nyon, Lausanne, Montreux, Chillon. No one need be dull in summer time at Geneva. But in the winter, when all the public festivities were over and week after week passed without a stranger bringing a fresh personality to the dinner-

table, the Pension Boccard was an abode of drear depression. If it had been chipped off from the earth's surface by the tail of a careless comet and sent whirling through space on an ecliptic of its own, it could not have been less in relation with external influences. It was thrown entirely on its own resources, which only too often gave way, as it were, beneath it.

There was nothing to do save reading and needlework and gossip. It was while pursuing the last avocation that Felicia gathered her chief materials for speculation. These women, what were they? Their names were Mrs. Stapleton, Miss Bunter, Frau Schultz, Fräulein Klinkhardt, and Madame Popea. American, English, German, Roumanian respectively. Yet in spite of wide divergencies in creed, nationality, and character, they all seemed strangely to belong to one class. They were apparently isolated, self-centred, without ties or aims or hopes. Each had travelled through Europe from pension to pension—a weary pilgrimage. Their lives were for the most part spent in listless idleness, only saved now and then

from inanition by the nerving influences of petty bickerings, violent intimacies, sordid jealousies. All had moods of kindness alternating with moods of cynical disregard of susceptibilities. Now and then a wave of hysteria would pass through the atmosphere of depression, when feminine velvet would be rudely thrust back and spiteful claws exposed to view. Even Mrs. Stapleton would occasionally break through her habitual restraint and be goaded into mordant expression. It was the isolation of these women, their vague references to the sheltering home of years ago, their cynical exposition and criticism of undreamed of facts, that made Felicia look upon her surroundings with a child's alarm at the unfamiliar.

Sometimes she felt home-sick and miserable, wished that her uncle and aunt, with whom her home had been for many years since the death of her parents, had taken her out with them to Bermuda. But they, worthy souls, when Colonel Graves was ordered abroad with the regiment, had thought that a year's continental life would be a treat for the girl, and had sent her, in

consequence, to the care of Mme. Boccard, a distant kinswoman, whose prospectus read like a synopsis of Eden. They had so set their hearts upon her enjoyment, that, now they were thousands of miles away, she felt it would be ungracious to complain. But she was very unhappy.

"*Mon Dieu!* This is getting terrible!" said Mme. Popea, one evening.

Dinner was over, and some of the ladies were passing the usual dreary evening in the salon.

"It is enough to drive you mad. It would be livelier in a convent. One would have Matins and Vespers and Compline—a heap of little duties. One could go to one's bed tired, and sleep. Here one sleeps all day, so that when night comes, one can't shut an eye."

"Why don't you go to the convent, Mme. Popea?" asked Mrs. Stapleton, mildly, looking up from her needlework.

"Ah! one cannot always choose," replied Mme. Popea, with a sigh. "Besides," she added, "one would have to be so good!"

"Yes; there is some truth in that,"

said Mrs. Stapleton. "It is better to be a serene sinner than a depressed saint! And sometimes we sinners have our hours of serenity."

"Not after such a dinner as we had to-night," remarked Frau Schultz, in German, with strident irritability. "The food is getting dreadful—and the wine! It is not good for the health. My stomach—"

"You should drink water, as Miss Graves and I do," said Mrs. Stapleton.

"Ah, you American and English women can drink water. We are not accustomed to it. In my home I never drank wine that cost less than four marks a bottle. I am not used to this. I shall complain to Mme. Boccard."

"It is bad," said Mme. Popea, "but it isn't as bad as it might be. At the Pension Schmidt we couldn't drink it without sugar."

She was a plump little woman, with a predisposition to cheerfulness. Besides, as she owed Mme. Boccard some two months' board and lodging, she could afford a little magnanimity. But Frau Schultz, who was conscious of scrupulous payment up to date,

had no such delicacy of feeling. She pursued the subject from her own standpoint, that of her own physiological peculiarities. By the time her tirade was ended, she had worked herself up into a fit state to give battle to Mme. Boccard, on which errand she incontinently proceeded.

"What a dreadful woman!" said Mrs. Stapleton, as the door slammed behind her.

"Ah, yes. Those Germans," said Mme. Popea, "they are always so unrefined. They think of nothing but eating and drinking. Herr Schleiermacher came to see me this afternoon. He has been to Hanover to see his *fiancée*, whom he can't marry. He was telling me about it. 'Ach!' he said, 'the last evening it was so grievous. She did hang round my neck for dree hours, so that I could not go out to drink beer with my vriendts!' Animal! All men are bad. But I think German men—ugh!"

She gave her shoulders an expressive shrug, and resumed her reading of an old copy of *Le Journal Amusant*, which she had brought down from her room.

"Where are the others?" asked Felicia,

dropping her book wearily on to her lap. It was a much-thumbed French translation of "The Chaplet of Pearls," which Mme. Boccard had procured for her from the circulating library in the Rue du Rhône. Felicia found it languid reading.

"Miss Bunter is tending her canary, which is moulting, or else she is writing to her *fiancé* in Burmah," replied Mrs. Stapleton.

"Is she *engaged?*"

Miss Bunter was some seven and thirty, thin and faded, the last person in the world, according to Felicia's ideas, to have a lover. Both ladies laughed at her astonishment.

"Yes. Hasn't she told you?" cried Mme. Popea. "She tells everyone—in confidence. They have been engaged for fifteen years. And they write each other letters—such fat packages—thick as that—every mail. Ah, *mon Dieu!* If a man treated me in that way—kept me waiting, waiting—"

She threw up her plump little hands with a half-threatening gesture.

"What would you have done?" asked Mrs. Stapleton.

"I should have consoled myself—*en attendant.* Oh, yes, I should have gone on writing; but I would not have let myself become a poor old maid for any man in the world. That is one thing I admire about Fräulein Klinkhardt. You were asking where she was to-night. I know, but I won't be indiscreet. She is *fiancée* too. She is not getting less young—*mais elle s'amuse, elle—en attendant.*"

Felicia did not grasp the full significance of Mme. Popea's insinuations, but she caught enough to set her cheeks burning, and she cast an appealing glance at Mrs. Stapleton.

"Won't you play us something?" said the latter, kindly, in response to the appeal.

"Ah, do!" said Mme. Popea, serenely. "You play so charmingly."

Felicia went to the piano, and ran her fingers over the keys. She did not feel in a mood for playing; music with her was an accomplishment, not an art to which she could instinctively bring bruised and quivering fibres to be soothed. She played mechanically, thinking of other things.



Felicia went to the piano and ran her fingers over the keys.

Once she struck a false note, and her ear caught a little indrawn hiss from Madame Popea, which brought her wandering attention sharply back. But her heart was not in it. She was thinking of poor little Miss Bunter, and the weary years of waiting, and how sad she must have been as, year by year, she had seen the youth dying out of her eyes and the bloom fading from her cheek. Fräulein Klinkhardt, too, who was amusing herself—*en attendant;* she felt as if something impure had touched her.

At the next false note, Mme. Popea rose softly, and went to Mrs. Stapleton.

"I am going to bed," she whispered. "These English girls are charming; but they should have dumb pianos made for them, that would speak only to their own souls."

When Felicia heard the click of the closing door, she started round on the music-stool.

"I hope I haven't driven Mme. Popea away with my strumming," she said, guiltily.

"Oh, no, dear," replied Mrs. Stapleton,

with cheerful assurance. "She is a lazy little body that always goes to bed early."

Felicia rose, took up *Le Journal Amusant*, which Mme. Popea had left behind, and sitting down, began to look through it. A few seconds later, however, she crumpled it fiercely, and threw it on the ground with a cry of disgust.

"How can ladies read such things?" she exclaimed.

She had never seen such a picture before, never conceived that the like could even have been visualized by the imagination. Its cynical immodesty, its obscene suggestion, gave her a sickening sensation of loathing.

Mrs. Stapleton picked up the offending journal, and skimmed over its pages with calm eyes and a contemptuous curl of the lip.

"Oh, how can you?" cried Felicia, writhing.

The other smiled, and, opening the door of the great porcelain stove, thrust the paper in amongst the glowing coals, and closed the door again. Then she came quickly up

to the couch where Felicia was, and sitting down by her side, took her hand.

"My poor child," she said, "I hope you are not too unhappy here."

The elder woman's voice was so soft, her manner was so gentle and feminine, that the girl's heart, that had been longing for six weeks, with a greater hunger day after day, for womanly sympathy, leapt towards her, and her eyes filled with tears.

"It is so strange here," she said, piteously, "and I feel so lost, without my friends and occupations, and—and—"

"Well? Tell me. Perhaps I may be able to help you."

The girl turned away her head.

"Other things. Sometimes I feel frightened. To-night—that newspaper — what Mme. Popea was saying—it seemed to scorch me."

Mrs. Stapleton registered a mental resolution to talk pointedly to Mme. Popea on the morrow. If English girls should have dumb pianos, it was only fair that Roumanian widows should have invisible indecent pictures.

She smoothed the back of Felicia's hot hands. Her own were cool and soft, and their touch was very grateful to Felicia.

"My poor child," she said, "my poor child."

She herself had suffered. She knew from sad tasting the bitterness of many fruits that grow in the garden of life. Like many women, she judged the flavour of another's future experiences by the aftertaste of her own past. There were many, many Dead Sea apples that a woman had to eat before the grave closed over her. The sight of the young soul shrinking at the foretaste filled her with a sense of infinite pathos.

"I wonder if you would let me call you by your name sometimes when we are alone," she said, gently.

The girl flashed a grateful glance.

"Would you really? It is Felicia."

"And mine is Katherine. I wonder how it would sound?"

"Katherine?" echoed Felicia, with a puzzled smile. "What do you mean?"

"I have not heard it for very many years. To everybody I have known I have been

Mrs. Stapleton. I should like to be called by my own name once again. Would you do so?"

"Oh! yes—gladly. But how sad! How very, very lonely you must be. I think I should pine away with loneliness. There must be quite a hundred people who call me Felicia."

"Then you must give us poor forlorn creatures some of your happiness," said Katherine, with a smile. "You must make allowances for us. Do not judge us too harshly."

"Oh! you must not compare yourself with the others," said Felicia; "you are quite different from—Mme. Popea, for instance."

"Ah, no, not very much," said Katherine, with a touch of bitterness. "We only differ a little through the circumstances of our upbringing, nationality, and so on. We are all the same at heart, weary of ourselves, of life, of each other. Most women have their homes, their children, their pleasant circle of friends. None of us has. We are failures. Either we have sought to get too much from

life and heaven has punished us for presumption, or circumstance has been against us—we have been too poor to conquer it. Ah, no, my dear child, don't think that we are merely a set of selfish, coarse, ill-tempered women. Each of us knows in her own heart that she is a failure, and she knows that all the others know it."

A flush of colour had come into her delicate cheek as she said this, and her lips closed rather tightly, showing fine, almost imperceptible vertical lines. Yet her eyes looked kindly at Felicia and smoothed any rough impression her words may have made.

The other's eyes met hers rather wonderingly. The tragedy that underlay this commonplace pension life was a new conception.

"I'll try to think more kindly of them," she said.

"And what about poor me?"

"Ah, you! I have never thought unkindly about you. In fact, I have wanted to know you, but you have always been so distant and reserved, until this evening; you and Mr. Chetwynd. He is so clever,

and so old—and I am only a girl—that I am afraid of boring him."

Katherine laughed at her naïve confession. "Why, Mr. Chetwynd is the kindest and most courteous old man in the world! I'll tell you what we'll do. I will get your seat moved up to our end of the table—away from Mme. Boccard, who has had you long enough—and then you can sit next to him. Would you like that?"

Felicia assented gladly. Mme. Boccard was a rather oppressive neighbour. Her conversation was as chaff before the wind, both in substance and utterance; and the few straws that Felicia, with her schoolgirl's knowledge of French, was able to seize, did not afford her much satisfaction.

"How can I thank you for being so kind to me?" she said, a little later, before they parted for the night.

"By calling me Katherine sometimes," said the other. "I am not so very, very old, you know; and, my dear child, it would comfort me."

Felicia went to sleep that night happier than she had done since her arrival in

Geneva. But she pondered many things before her eyes closed. She was ready to pity Mme. Popea for being a failure, but Mrs. Stapleton had failed to explain to her the necessary connection between an unhappy life and *Le Journal Amusant.* If the latter was a necessary solace, it brought fresh terrors to the anticipation of sorrow.

CHAPTER II.

KATHERINE.

"Don't waste your pity upon me," wrote old Mr. Chetwynd to his son Raine, an Oxford don. "This is not the Euxine, and even if it were, there would be compensation. I have fallen in love in my old age. She is a little brown-haired, brown-eyed, fresh-coloured English girl, who has come lately to sit by me at table. Owing to her, a change has come o'er the spirit of my meals. I say and do all kinds of foolish things. I caught myself yesterday brushing my coat before coming down to dinner. I shall be wearing a flower in my buttonhole before long. I am already supplied with bouquets.

"My young lady's ignorance is fascinating; it forms a bond between us. The Oxford young ladies, who will tell you of their charming talk with the dear professor,

little know what wicked satirical thoughts they have left behind in the dear professor's breast. But this one actually does not want to teach me anything. Think of it! She is Homeric. I told her she reminded me of Nausicaa. Instead of taking the allusion as a text to preach the newest theories of female education, she asked me sweetly who Nausicaa was. It is wonderful! In brief, my dear Raine, if you value the place you hold in your poor old daddy's heart, you must pay me your promised visit with the utmost celerity."

He was a striking figure in the pension, this old scholar, whose heart Felicia had won. All the ladies knew that he was a professor, wonderfully learned, and that he was writing a learned book, in which pursuit he spent half his days among the musty manuscripts in the Geneva University Library. In consequence, they looked upon him with a certain awe. They saw very little of him, except at meals, and then only those who were within easy conversational distance profited much by his society. Now and then, on rare occasions, he came into

the salon after dinner, where he would take a hand at piquet with Mme. Popea, whose conspicuously best behaviour on these occasions was a subject of satirical pleasure to the others. But as a general rule he retired to his own room and his private avocations.

As a matter of fact, he was an Oxford scholar of considerable repute, honoured and welcomed in every Common Room. In his middle age he had filled a professorial chair in a Scotch University, which after some years he had resigned for reasons of climate and failing health. At present he was engaged on critical work dealing with the Swiss Reformers, and involving accurate documentary research. He had already spent the latter part of the summer at Zürich, examining the Zwinglius MSS., and now he was busy with the Calvinistic treasures of Geneva. How long his task would last would depend upon his rate of progress. But as he had let his small house in Oxford for a year, and as the quiet of the Pension Boccard suited him, he had decided upon staying at Geneva for a considerable time.

A strange anomaly, with his learning and industry, in the midst of the heterogeneous feminine idleness of the Pension. In a vague way all the women felt it. His appearance, too, was strikingly suggestive of a personality inaccessible to the trivialities round which their own souls centred. Once a strong, thick-set man, he retained at seventy-two, great breadth of bent shoulders. His hair, scanty at the top and long, was still black, as were his heavy eyebrows, beneath which gleamed lustrous black eyes. The sombre depth of the latter and the deep furrowings on his dark, square face gave it, in moments of repose, a stern expression; but when a smile or the play of fancy or interest lit it up, it was like the sunshine breaking upon a granite scaur. The very magic of the change had in it something eerie, incomprehensible. And a rare tenderness could sometimes well from the heart into the eyes, making the old face beautiful; but that was not displayed for the benefit of the ladies of the Pènsion.

The fresh instincts of the young girl,

however, divined the underlying tenderness and brought it to the surface. It was a natural intimacy, which cheered both lives. The old scholar's genial humour, delicate, playful fancy, evoked in Felicia spontaneity of merry thought and speech. The meals, which once had been such ordeals, when eaten under the whirlwind of Mme. Boccard's half-intelligible platitudes, became invested with a rare charm. Instead of sitting shy and silent, she laughed and jested with the inconsequence of twenty. The change was so marked, that one day, when a mock quarrel arose between the old man and herself, over the exact halving of a pear, Mme. Popea elevated surprised eyebrows, and nudged Frau Schultz her neighbour.

"*Voilà bien les femmes!* a man—a mummy will suffice—but let it be masculine!"

"And the men, they are all the same," said Frau Schultz, in her thick South German. "Give them a pretty face, and no matter how old, they are on fire."

Frau Schultz applied herself again seriously to her meal, whilst Madame Popea repeated

her own observation to Madame Boccard, who laughed, and prophesied a wedding in the pension. But as all this was whispered, it did not reach the ears of the parties concerned, at the other end of the table.

Mrs. Stapleton listened amusedly to the light talk between Mr. Chetwynd and Felicia, though with a certain surprise and wistfulness. Charming and courteous as the old man was when the mood for conversation was on him, she had never been able to open in him that light playful vein. What Frau Schultz had expressed coarsely, Katherine, with a finer nature, felt delicately. It was Felicia's fresh maidenhood that had instinctively gladdened the old man—a possession she herself had lost for ever, with which she could gladden no man's heart. She looked across the table and smiled at her own thought. What did it matter, after all? She had had the roses and lilies in her time, and they had not brought her any great happiness. Her life had been lived. Still, a woman of thirty mourns her lost youth—all the more if it has been a failure—just as an older woman mourns the death of a

scrapegrace son. And though Katherine smiled at herself, she wished for some of it back, even to charm such an old, old man as Mr. Chetwynd. There will ever be much that is feminine in woman.

"You have made a conquest," she said soon afterwards to Felicia.

"Haven't I?" laughed the girl. "He is so sweet. Do you know, I think sweet people, when they grow very, very old, become quite young again."

"Or, in this case, more accurately, isn't it that extremes touch?"

"Do you think I am so very young?" asked Felicia, seizing the objective. "I am twenty."

"Happy girl," said Katherine, smiling. "But what I meant was, that if you were thirty and he was fifty, you probably would have fewer points of contact."

"Or, if I were ten and he were eighty, we would play together like kittens," said Felicia, with girlish irreverence. "Well, it doesn't matter. He is the dearest old man in the world, and it was very nice of you to arrange for me to sit next to him."

"It seems to have brightened you, Felicia."

"Oh, yes, wonderfully. I was getting so bored and dull and miserable. It is not very gay now, but I have something to look forward to every day. And your letting me talk to you has made a great difference."

"I am afraid I am not very entertaining," said Katherine.

"Sometimes you are so sad," said Felicia, sympathetically. "I wish I could help you."

"I am afraid you would have to upheave the universe, my dear."

Felicia looked at her with such wonderful gravity in her brown eyes that Katherine broke into a laugh.

"Well, you can do it gradually. Begin with my work-basket, will you? and find me a spool of No. 100 thread."

Without overstepping the bounds of kindly friendship, they saw much of each other. An imperceptible shadow of reserve in Katherine's manner, a certain variability of mood, a vein of hardness in her nature ever liable to be exposed by a chance thought,

checked in the young girl the impulses of a more generous affection. Katherine was conscious of this; conscious, too, of no efforts to win more from the girl. Now and then she sounded a note of explanation.

Once they were talking of the pension's dreariness—an endless topic. It happened that Felicia was disposed to take a cheerful view.

"Every cloud has a silver lining," she said.

"By way of heightening its blackness, my dear," said Katherine. "Besides, the lining is turned to heaven and the blackness to earth, so it does not help us much."

"Oh, why are you so bitter?"

"Bitter?" echoed Katherine, musingly. "Oh, no! I am not, really. But perhaps it were better that you should think so."

But for all her refusal to admit Felicia any deeper into her heart, Katherine welcomed her companionship frankly. She had looked forward almost shudderingly to the dreary isolation of the winter. Whom could she choose as a companion, to exchange a thought with beyond those of ordinary

civility? By a process of elimination she had arrived at little Miss Bunter, with her canaries, her *Family Herald* and *Modern Society*, her mild spinsterish chit-chat. It was a depressing prospect; but Felicia had saved her. Her society relieved the monotony of those terrible dreary, idle days, took her out of herself, stilled for a few odd hours the yearnings for a bright full life—yearnings all the more inwardly gnawing by reason of the ever exerted strain to check their outward expression.

She was standing before her glass one morning brushing her hair. She had shaken it back loose; it was fair, long, and thick, and she had taken up the brush languidly. She was not feeling well. Frau Schultz had unsuccessfully tried to provoke a quarrel the night before; a little graceful experiment in philanthropy that had engaged her attention of late had ignominiously failed; the rain was pouring in torrents outside; the day contained no hope; a crushing sense of the futility of things came over her like a pall. She had roused herself, given her hair a determined shake, and commenced to

brush vigorously, looking at herself sideways in the glass. But a weak pity for the weary, delicate face she saw there filled her eyes with tears. Her arm seemed heavy and tired. She dropped the brush and sank down on a chair, and spreading her arms on the toilet-table, buried her face in them.

"Oh I can't, I can't!" she cried, with a kind of moan. "What is the good? Why should I get up day after day and go through this weariness? Oh, my God! What a life! Some day it will drive me mad! I wish I were dead."

The sobs came and shook her shoulders, hidden by the spreading mass of hair. She could not help the pity for herself.

Suddenly there was a knock at the door. She sprang to her feet, glanced hurriedly at the glass, and touched her face quickly with the powder-puff. In a moment she had recovered.

Felicia entered in response to her acknowledgment of the knock. She had been out in the rain; her cheeks were glowing above the turned-up collar of her jacket.

"Oh, you are only just dressing. I have been up and about for ages. See, I have brought you some flowers. Where shall I put them?"

Katherine felt gladdened by the little act of kindness. She thanked Felicia, and went about the room collecting a few vases.

"Arrange them for me, dear, whilst I finish my hair."

She returned to the looking-glass, and Felicia remained by the table busy with the flowers.

"I went as far as the library with Mr. Chetwynd," said Felicia. "I told him he ought not to go out to-day, but he would go. When 'Raine,' as he calls him, comes, I shall have to talk to him seriously about his father."

"The son has definitely settled to come, then?" asked Katherine, with a hair-pin between her lips.

"Oh, yes. Mr. Chetwynd can talk of nothing else. He will be here quite soon."

"It will be a good thing," said Katherine.

"Yes; it will do the dear old man good."

Ordinarily Katherine would have smiled

at the ingenuousness of the reply; but this morning her nerves were unstrung.

"I wasn't thinking of him. I was thinking of ourselves—us women."

"I wonder what he'll be like," said Felicia.

"What does it matter? He will be a man."

"Oh, it does matter. If he is not nice—"

"My dear child," said Katherine, wheeling round, "it does not signify whether he has the face of an ogre and the manners of a bear. He will be a man; and it is a man that we want among us!"

The girl shrank away. To look upon mankind as necessary elements in life had never before occurred to her. She would have been quite as excited if a nice girl had been expected at the pension.

"But surely—" she stammered.

Katherine divined her thought; but she was too much under the power of her mood to laugh it away.

"No!" she cried, with a scorn that she felt to be unjust—and that very consciousness made her accent more passionate.

"We don't want a man to come so that one of us can marry him by force! God forbid! Most of us have had enough of marrying and giving in marriage. Heaven help me, I am not as bad as that yet, to throw myself into the arms of the first man who came, so that he could carry me away from this Aceldama. But we want a man here to make us feel ashamed of the meannesses and pettinesses that we women display before each other, and to make us hide them, and appear before each other as creatures to respect. Women are the lesser race; we cannot exist by ourselves; we become flaccid and back-boneless and small—oh, so small and feeble! I get to despise my sex, to think there is nothing, nothing in us; no reserve of strength, nothing but a mass of nerves and soft, flabby flesh. Oh, my dear child, you don't know it yet—let us hope you never will know it—this craving for a man, the self-contempt of it, to crave for nothing more but just to touch the hem of his garment to work the miracle of restoring you to the dignity of your womanhood. Ah!"

She waved her arms in a passionate gesture and walked about the room with clenched hands. Felicia arranged the flowers mechanically. These things were new to her philosophy. She felt troubled by them, but she kept silent. Katherine continued her parable, the pent-up disgusts and wearinesses of months finding vehement expression.

"Yes, a man, a man. It is good that he is coming. A being without jangling nerves, and with a fresh, broad mind that only sees things in bulk and does not dissect the infinitely little. He will come here like a sea breeze. It is a physical need among us, a man's presence now and then, with his heavy frame and deep voice and resonant laugh, his strength, his rough ways, his heavy tread, his great hands. Ah! you are young; you think I am telling you dreadful things; you may never know it. It is only women who live alone that can know what it is to yearn to have a man's strong arm, brother or father or husband, to close round you as you cry your poor weak woman's heart out, and the more humble, self-abasing

longing, just to long for a man's voice. What does it matter what the man is like?"

There was a few moments' silence. Katherine went on with her dressing. The words had relieved her heart, yet she felt ashamed at having spoken so bitterly before the young girl. *Maxime debetur*—. She thought of the maxim and bit her lip. But was she not young too? Were they so far apart in age that they could not meet on common grounds? She looked in the glass. Her charm had not yet gone. Yet she wished she had not spoken.

Felicia finished arranging the flowers, and disposed the four little vases about the room. Then she went up to Katherine and put her arm round her waist.

"I am sorry."

It was all the girl could say, but it made Katherine turn and kiss her cheek.

"I expect Mr. Chetwynd is going to be very nice if he is anything like his father," she said in her natural tones. "Forgive me for having been disagreeable. I woke up like it. Sometimes this pension gets on one's nerves."

"It is frightfully dull," assented Felicia. "But you are the busiest of anybody. You are always working or reading or going out to nurse poor sick people. I wish I did anything half as useful."

"Well, you have made me more cheerful than I was, if that is anything," replied Katherine.

A little later the old man announced to her the speedy arrival of his son Raine. Katherine listened, made a few polite inquiries, learned the functions of a college tutor, and the difference between a lecturer and a professor.

"He is a great big fellow," said the old man. "He would make about ten of me. So don't expect to see a thin, doubled up, elderly young man in spectacles!"

"Is your son married?" asked Fräulein Klinkhardt, who sat next to Felicia.

She was a fair, florid woman of over thirty, with strongly hewn features and a predisposition for bold effects of attire. The old man, who did not like her, said that her hats were immoral. A glint of gold on one of her front teeth gave a pecu-

liar effect, in the way of suggestion, to her speech.

"He has never told me," said the old man, with his most courtly smile.

"You will see, she will try to marry him when he comes," whispered Frau Schultz to Mme. Boccard.

But Fräulein Klinkhardt laughed at the old man's reply.

"That is a pity, for married men—whom one knows to be married—are always more agreeable."

"And women, too," said Mme. Popea with a little grimace of satisfaction.

"A bachelor is generally more chivalrous," said Miss Bunter, who always took things seriously. "He acts more in accordance with his ideals of women."

"Is Saul also among the prophets?" asked Katherine with a smile, "Miss Bunter among the cynics?"

"Oh, dear! I hope not," replied Miss Bunter in alarm; "I did not mean that, but a bachelor always seems more romantic. What do you think, Miss Graves?"

"I don't know," said Felicia, laughing;

"I like all men when they are nice, and it doesn't seem to make any difference whether they are married or not. Perhaps it may with *very* young men," she added reflectively. "But then very young men are different. For instance, all the young subs in my uncle's regiment; it would seem as ridiculous to call them bachelors as to call me a spinster."

"But you are a spinster, Miss Graves," said Miss Bunter, mildly platitudinous.

"Oh, please!—" laughed Felicia. "A spinster is—" she paused in some confusion, "An old maid," she was going to add, but she remembered it might be a tender point with Miss Bunter. Frau Schultz, however, struck in with her harsh voice,—

"At what age does a woman begin to be a spinster, Miss Graves?"

Frau Schultz's perverted sense of tact was of the quality of genius. Old Mr. Chetwynd came to the rescue of the maiden ladies.

"In England, when their first banns of marriage are published," he said.

Mme. Boccard turned to Mme. Popea to

have the reply translated into French. Then she explained it volubly to the table.

The question at issue, the relative merits of bachelors and married men, was never beaten out; for at this juncture, the meal being over, old Mr. Chetwynd rose, turned, and hobbled out of the room, taking Felicia with him.

An hour later Katherine was picking her way through the mud up the long unsightly street in the old part of the town that leads to the Hotel de Ville. At the ill-kept gate-way of a great decayed house, she stopped, and entering, descended the steps at a side doorway beneath to a room on the basement, whose lunette window was on a level with the roadway. A very old woman opened the door to her knock, and welcomed her with an—

"*Ah, Madame! C'est encore vous!*" and led her in with many expressions of delight.

It was a poor, squalid enough room, very dark, ill-kept, littered with cooking utensils, cookery, and strange articles of clothing. An old man lay in the great wooden bed-stead, his face barely visible in the dim light

which was further obscured by the dingy white curtains running on a rope, fixed over the bed.

"Jean-Marie," cried the old woman, "here is Madame come to read to you. Will Madame give herself the trouble to sit down? My daughter has not come in yet, so the room is still unmade."

The old man raised himself on his elbow and grinned at Katherine.

"One would say it was an angel when Madame comes."

The old woman broke out again in welcome. It was so good of Madame to come. Jean-Marie could do nothing but talk of her. Really Jean-Marie was right, and she was an angel.

Katherine took the venerable wooden arm-chair that was placed for her near the stove, accepted graciously the pillow that the old woman took from the bed to make her more comfortable, and after a few minutes' gossip opened the book she had brought with her and began to read. The old man turned so that he could fix his eyes upon her. His old wife sat on a straight-backed chair at the

foot of the bed and listened in deep attention. Katherine read on amid a rapt silence, only broken now and then by an "*oh, la! la!*" muttered under the breath, at which she could scarcely repress a smile. She was happier now. Her best, kindest, tenderest self only was shown to this poor, broken-down old couple who seemed to worship her.

There was a humour blended with pathos, too, in the situation that appealed to her. For the book in which their whole souls were concentrated was a French translation of "Robinson Crusoe."

CHAPTER III.

LOST IN THE SNOW.

It was the middle of January. Felicia stood at the salon window and looked out at the snow falling, falling in the deserted street. She was oppressed by the dead silence of things. There was not even a cheerful fire to crackle in the room, which was heated by the cold white porcelain stove in the corner. All the ladies had retired to their rooms, for their usual afternoon siesta, and there was not a sound in the house. She caught sight of a cab passing down the street, but it moved with a deathlike noiselessness over the snow. She half wished the driver would crack his whip, although she hated the maniacal pastime, dear to Genevese cabmen, as much as Schopenhauer himself. But he passed on, a benumbed, silent spectre, huddled up on his box.

Nothing but stillness, dreariness, and desolation. The house seemed empty, the street empty, the world empty.

Raine Chetwynd had come and gone. For a brief season his hearty voice and cheery face had gladdened the little pension. He had come with his robustness of moral fibre, his culture, his broad knowledge of the world, and his vigorous manhood, and the pulse of the community seemed to beat stronger for it. In spite of the old man's warning, they had all expected to see in the young "professor" a pale image of his father, minus the softening charm of age. But, instead, they had been presented with a type of blond, Anglo-Saxon comeliness—tall, deep-chested, fresh-coloured, with an open, attractive face, blue-eyed and fair-moustached, which, at first sight, seemed to belong to a thousand men who rowed and cricketed, and lived honest, unparticularized lives, but on closer examination showed itself to be that of a man who could combine thought and action, the scholar and the athlete, the man of intellectual breath and refinement, and the cheery, practical man

of the world. He was a man, in the specific feminine sense. He had brought into the pension the influence that Mrs. Stapleton had insisted on, with such passionate bitterness, as being needful in a woman's life. Each of the women had brightened under it, exhibiting instinctively the softer side of her nature. Mme. Popea had kept hidden from view the shapeless wrapper, adorned with cheap soiled lace, in which, much to Frau Schultz's annoyance, she would now and then appear at déjeuner, and had tidied and curled her hair betimes, instead of leaving it till the late afternoon. In Frau Schultz a dignified urbanity had taken the place of peevish egotism. Little Miss Bunter had perked up like a frozen sparrow warmed into life, and had chirruped merrily to her canaries. The only friction that his presence had caused, had arisen between Mme. Boccard and Fräulein Klinkhardt, who had broadly hinted a request to be placed next to him at table. A pretty quarrel had resulted from Mme. Boccard's refusal; after which Fräulein Klinkhardt went to bed for a day, and Mme. Boccard called her softly,

under her breath, a German crane, which appeared to afford her much relief.

It had been pleasant and comfortable to see a man again in the salon. It had broken the sense of isolation they carried with them, like lead in their hearts, all through the winter. Then, too, he had been a man whom one and all could honestly respect. He had been open-hearted, frank with them all, showing, in a younger, fresher way, the charm of courtesy that distinguished his father. But naturally he had brought himself nearer to them, had not seemed placed in such remote moral and intellectual spheres.

Besides, there had been a few festivities. Old Mr. Chetwynd had given, in honour of his son's visit, a Christmas dinner, which had won him the heart of Frau Schultz. Fräulein Klinkhardt and herself had lavished more than their usual futile enthusiasm on a Christmas tree, which, owing to Raine, had something better than its customary *succès d'estime.* He had taken them to the theatre, made up skating parties at Villeneuve, at the other side of the lake. Some friends of

his at Lausanne had given a large dance, to which he had managed to escort Felicia and Katherine, under his father's protection. A couple of undergraduates of his own college were there; they came a few days afterwards to Geneva to see him; and that was another merry evening at the pension.

Katherine Stapleton had brightened, too, under the gaiety, and her eyes had lost for the time the touch of weariness that saddened her face in her gentler moods, and her laugh had rung true and fresh. There were many evident points of contact between herself and him, much that was complementary in each to the other.

One day he had said to her laughingly,—

"I have come round to the opinion—which I had not at first—that you are the most incomprehensibly feminine thing I know."

"And I," she had replied, "to the after-opinion that you are the most comprehensibly masculine one."

"Is that why we get on so well together?"

"That is what I had meant to convey," she had answered with a light laugh.

The rest of which conversation lingered long after his departure in Katherine's memory.

Now he had gone, and life at the pension resumed its dreary, monotonous round. Raine Chetwynd would have been surprised had he known the change wrought by his departure.

Felicia obviously shared in the general depression, and, like Katherine, had memories of bright hours in which the sun seemed to shine exclusively for her own individual benefit. She thought of them wretchedly, as she stood by the window watching the flakes fall through the grey air.

A voice behind her caused her to start, though the words seemed to come out of some far distance. It was old Mr. Chetwynd. He had been somewhat ailing the last day or two, unable to go out. In a fit of restlessness, he had wandered down to the salon.

"Lost in the snow?" he asked, coming to her side.

"Yes," she replied, with a half sigh. "I think so. Quite. I was beginning to doubt whether I should find my way safe home again, and to grow almost tearful."

"You have no business with low spirits, my dear," he replied, with a smile. "You should leave that to old people. Their hearts get lost in the snow sometimes, and when they feel them gradually getting stone-cold and frozen, then they may be excused for despairing."

"What is to prevent it from being the same with young hearts?"

"The warm blood of their youth."

"That may keep them warm, but it doesn't prevent their being lost," said Felicia, argumentatively.

"Well, what does it signify if you do go out of your way a little, when your legs are strong and your blood circulates vigorously?" he said cheerfully.

"But the young heart *can* get lost," said Felicia.

"I won't chop logic with you, young lady. I am trying to teach you that youth is a glorious thing and ought to be its own

happiness. I suppose it is attempting to teach the unlearnable. Ah me! How beautiful it would be to be three and thirty again!"

"Three and thirty! Why, that is quite old!"

He looked at her with a touch of sadness and amusement, his head on one side.

"I suppose it is for you. I was forgetting. To me it is youth, the full prime of a man's life, when the world is at his feet. Later on he begins to feel it is on his shoulders. But at thirty-three—I was thinking of Raine. That is his age."

"Have you heard from Mr. Chetwynd?" asked Felicia, after a longish pause.

"Oh, yes. He never keeps me long without news of him. There are only the two of us."

"You seem very fond of one another," said Felicia.

"I am proud of my son, my dear, and he is foolish enough to be proud of his poor old daddy."

His voice had grown suddenly very soft, and he spoke with the simplicity of old age.

His eyes looked out into the distance, their brightness veiled with a strange tenderness. Felicia was touched, felt strongly drawn to him. She lost sense of the scholar of profound learning in that of the old man leaning on his son's strong arm. And the son's manhood grew in her eyes as the father's waned.

"It is not many men," he continued musingly, "that would have given up a Christmas vacation and come all this way just to see an old, broken-down fellow like me."

Felicia stared out of the window, but she no longer saw the snow.

"You must miss him dreadfully."

"I always do. We are much together in Oxford. He always gives me at least a few minutes of his day."

"How good of him. It must be beautiful for you."

"A great happiness—yes, a great happiness!"

He too was looking out of the window, by Felicia's side, his hands behind his back, and likewise saw nothing. A spell of wist-

fulness was over them both—bound them unconsciously together.

"A tender-hearted fellow," said the old man. "Wonderfully sympathetic."

"He seems to understand everyone so."

"Yes; that is Raine's way—he gets behind externals. I have missed him sadly since he left."

"Yes," said Felicia, softly.

"And I have been wishing for him all day."

"So have I!" said Felicia, under the spell.

Her tone suddenly awakened the old man. His eyes flashed into intelligence as a darkened theatre can leap into light. The girl met them, recoiled a step at their brilliance, and shrank as if a search-light had laid bare her soul.

She had scarcely known what she had been saying. A quivering second. Was there time to recover? She struggled desperately. If the tears had not come, she would have won. But they rose in a flood, and she turned away her head sharply, burning with shame.

The old man laid his thin hand on her shoulder, and bent round to look into her face.

"My dear little girl—my poor child!" he said gently, patting her shoulder.

For all her shrinking, she felt the tenderness of the touch. To have withdrawn from it would have been to repulse. But it added to her wretchedness. She could not speak, only cry, with the helpless consciousness that every second's silence and every tear were issues whence oozed more and more of her secret.

"Does Raine know?" whispered the old man.

Then she turned quickly, her brown eyes glistening, and found speech.

"He know? Know what? Oh, you must never tell him—never, never, never! He would think—and I couldn't bear him to, although he will never see me again. And, please, Mr. Chetwynd, don't think I have told you anything—I haven't. Of course, I only miss him—as every one does."

Felicia moved softly towards the door, longing for retreat. The old man followed at her side.

"Forgive me, my dear," he said, with a shadow of a smile round his lips. "I have been indiscreet, and leapt to wrong conclusions. Raine is so bright that we all miss him—equally."

She glanced at him. The smile found a watery reflection in her eyes. In another moment she was on the stairs, fleeing to the comfort of her own room.

The old man, left to himself, kicked open the door of the stove, drew up a chair, and spread his hands out before the glow.

"Louis Chetwynd," he said to himself, "you are no better than an old fool."

The subject was never touched upon again, but it seemed always afterwards to be in their thoughts when together. At first Felicia was shy—felt the blood rise to her cheeks whenever the old man's bright eyes were fixed upon her. But her involuntary admission had stirred a great tenderness in his heart. Somehow he had always thought sadly of the possibility of Raine marrying, although he had urged him to it many times. Up to now he had been the first —or thought he had, which comes to the

same thing—in Raine's affections, and he could not yield that first place without a pang. And it would be to a woman not good enough for Raine; that was certain. If he could only choose for him the paragon that was his equal, then the surrender would be less hard. But Raine would choose for himself. It was a way even the most loving of sons had—one of the perversities of the scheme of things. Now, Felicia's confession and his own feelings towards her supplied him with a happy solution to this vexed question. Why should not Raine marry Felicia?

He used to argue it out with himself when his intellectual conscience told him he ought to be criticizing Calvin's condemnation of Servetus, and pulverizing the learned Beza. But he soothed it by reflecting that he was pursuing a philosophical method of inquiry. He put it syllogistically. Girls do not fall in love with a man until he has given them good reason. Felicia was in love with Raine. Therefore he had given her good reason. Again, an honourable man does not give a girl such reasons unless he loves her.

Raine was an honourable man. Therefore he loved her. Which was extremely satisfactory; and had it not been for the uneasy suspicion of a fallacy in his first major, he would have written off to Raine there and then. In spite of the fallacy, however, he wove his old man's web of romance, saw Felicia married to Raine, and surrendered his first place with great gladness. For he would be second in the hearts of two, which common arithmetic shows to be equal to first in the heart of one. And when he had definitely settled all this in his mind, he revoked the judgment he had previously passed upon himself, and felt distinctly gratified at his own tact and shrewdness. So the liking that he had conceived for Felicia developed into a tenderer sentiment, of whose existence she gradually became aware, though naturally she remained in ignorance of its cause.

She fought fierce battles with herself during the next few weeks. If she were ever going to see him again, there would have been a fearful joy, a strange mingling of shame and dizzying hope to keep her

heart excited. But as he had gone for ever out of her path, her common sense coming to the aid of her ashamedness strove to crush her futile fancies. They took a great deal of killing, however, especially as she found the friendship between Raine's father and herself growing daily stronger. She longed for the day of her release to come, when she could join her uncle and aunt in Bermuda.

CHAPTER IV.

"WHERE THE BROOK AND RIVER MEET."

"WILL you come for a walk this beautiful morning, Miss Graves?" asked Frau Schultz.

Felicia had intended to pursue her study of scientific dressmaking under Mrs. Stapleton's tuition, but she acceded graciously enough. She had considered it her duty to like Frau Schultz; yet Frau Schultz remained her pet aversion. Although she still winced under Mme. Popea's innuendoes and Fräulein Klinkhardt's pretty free theories of life, yet she managed to find something likeable in each. But Frau Schultz's red, weather-beaten face, coarse habits and spiteful tongue, jarred upon her. She smiled pleasantly, however, when she came down in her fur-trimmed jacket, hat and muff, and

met Frau Schultz on the landing outside the salon.

"It will do you good. You sit too much in the house," said Frau Schultz magisterially.

It seemed a lovely day when the sunshine was looked at from the windows of a warm room, but outside, the *bise* was blowing, and caught the face like a million razor-edges. Felicia put up her muff with a little cry, as soon as they emerged into the open air.

"Oh! this dreadful *bise!*"

"Ach! It is nothing," said the other, who prided herself on her pachydermaty. "You English girls would sacrifice everything to your complexions. If your skin cracks you can put on some cold cream. But you will have had your exercise."

Frau Schultz wore an imitation sealskin jacket, a new crape hat with broad strings tied under her chin, and thick grey woollen gloves. Felicia wondered, with not unpardonable vindictiveness, how many cracks would do her appreciable damage.

"I don't care a little bit about my complexion," she replied stoutly, resolved, for

the honour of her countrywomen, to face a blizzard, if called upon. "I have felt worse east winds than this in England."

"Ah, your England! It is a wonderful place," said Frau Schultz.

They walked along by the end of the Jardin Anglais, crossed the bridge and proceeded by the Quai du Mont Blanc in the direction of the Kursaal. Frau Schultz was evidently in an atrabiliar mood. Felicia began to be rather grateful to the *bise*, which does not favour conversation. But she had not reckoned with Frau Schultz's voice. As soon as it had found the right pitch, by means of desultory remarks, it triumphed over mere wind, and shrieked continuously.

"I asked you to come out because I wanted to talk to you."

"Perhaps she prefers talking in a hurricane," thought Felicia in comic desperation. But all she said was,—

"Oh?"

"Yes. You are so young and inexperienced that I have thought it my duty to advise you. Mme. Boccard is too busy. I



She buried her face in her pillow, trying to hide from herself her self-abasement.

am a mother. I brought up my Löttchen excellently, and she married last year. I am clearly the only one in the pension who knows what is suitable for a young girl and what isn't."

Felicia looked at her in some astonishment from under the wind depressed hat brim.

"I am sure I am getting on very well."

"Ah, you think so. But you are wrong. You cannot touch pitch without stinking."

Frau Schultz's English was apt to fail her now and then.

"Really, I don't understand at all, Frau Schultz."

"I will make myself quite plain. You have become too great a friend with Mrs. Stapleton. She is the pitch."

Felicia stopped short, her eyes watering with wind and indignation.

"If you say such things of my friends, Frau Schultz, I shall go home again."

"I did not hear," said Frau Schultz coming closer.

Felicia repeated her observation, with an irritated little patting of her foot.

"*Ach!*" cried the other impatiently, "I come to talk with you out of motherly kindness, for your own good, and you get angry. It is not polite either, as I am so much older than you. I repeat that Mrs. Stapleton is a bad woman. If you do not like to walk with me, I will walk with myself. But I have done my duty. Are you going to stand, Miss Graves, or will you proceed?"

Felicia, in spite of her indignant resentment of Frau Schultz's tone, hesitated for a moment. She had seen too many sordid squabbles in the pension, in consequence of which women would not speak to each other for a week, and asked each other vicariously to pass the salt, not to feel a wholesome horror at the prospect of finding herself involved in one. Hitherto she had escaped. So she checked her outburst of wrath.

"I shall be happy to go on, Frau Schultz, if you will drop the subject," she said.

"*Ach, so!*" replied Frau Schultz, enigmatically, and they continued their walk. But after this, conversation was not cordial. At the Kursaal they turned and retraced their steps.

On the Quai du Mont Blanc, where the steamers lay at their moorings, Frau Schultz stopped and looked at the view. Things were vivid in their spring freshness, and stood out clear in the wind-swept air. The larches in Rousseau's Island had put on their green, and so had the clustering limes in the Jardin Anglais, at the other end of the bridge. Above the white, tree-hidden shops and cafés on the Grand Quai, the old town rose sharply defined, around the grim cathedral. Straight in front was the ever sea-blue lake, its fringe of trees on the other side, just hiding the villas at the foot of the hills; and away in the intense distance behind them rose the crest of Mont Blanc, shimmering like frosted silver against the blue sky.

At the sight of the latter, Frau Schultz drew a long, rapt breath.

"*Wunderschön!*"

She would not trust herself to speak English. She looked at Felicia for responsive enthusiasm. But Felicia was angry, and she could not help feeling a little resentment against Mont Blanc, for affording

Frau Schultz pleasurable sensations. But she replied politely that it was very pretty.

"How few of you English have any soul!" said Frau Schultz, as they went on again.

"I think it is that we are not sentimental," said Felicia.

"I never could quite understand what that 'sentimental' is, that you are all so afraid of."

"It is making the same fuss about little emotions as one only could about big ones."

"So you think I am sentimental because I admire the glorious nature?"

"I did not say so, Frau Schultz."

"Ah, but you thought so. It is the way you all have. Nothing is good but what you put your seal to."

It was decidedly not a pleasant walk. Frau Schultz took up the parable of the narrow-minded Englishman, and expounded it through the *bise*. Felicia longed for home. To try to turn the conversation into a calmer channel, she took advantage of a lull, and inquired after Frau Schultz's daughter. The ingenious device succeeded.

Löttchen's early history lasted until they reached their own street. Felicia did not know whether to hate Löttchen for being such a paragon, or to pity her for being so parented. At last she made a rash remark.

"I don't think you gave Fräulein Schultz much chance of doing anything wrong."

"I was her mother," replied Frau Schultz with dignity, "and in Germany young girls obey their mothers and respect the mothers of other young girls. If I had spoken to a German girl as I did to you this morning, she would have been grateful."

"I am very sorry, Frau Schultz, but I don't like to hear my friends spoken ill of."

"I wanted to save you from those friends. I say again, Mrs. Stapleton is not the person I should let my innocent daughter associate with."

Felicia fired up. They were within a few yards of the entrance to the pension.

"You know nothing whatever against Mrs. Stapleton. I think it very unkind of you."

"*So!* Ask her where her husband is."

"She is a widow."

Frau Schultz looked at her and broke into derisive laughter. It jarred through the girl as if she had trodden upon an electric eel. She left Frau Schultz at the foot of the staircase, and ran up by herself, tingling with anger and disgust.

Six months ago she would scarcely have divined Frau Schultz's insinuations. Now she did. Her mental range had widened considerably since she had lived in the pension. A less refined nature might have been to some extent coarsened by the experience, but her knowledge only brought her keener repugnance. She was no longer puzzled or frightened, but disgusted—sometimes revolted. It seemed as if she could never get free from the taint. Even Katherine, whose society, since they had grown more intimate, she had sought more and more, and to whom she had gone for comfort and pure breath, when the air had been close with lax talk or unsavoury recrimination — even Katherine was now declared by this vulgar, domineering woman to be infected by what, in the girl's eyes, was the same leprosy. She did not believe

it. In other matters Felicia had seen Frau Schultz convicted as a liar. But the imputation seemed like a foul hand laid upon their friendship.

It was a relief when she went into Katherine's room and saw the welcome on the quiet, delicate face that looked up from the needlework. Katherine's room, too, always cheered her. Like Katherine herself, it was different from the others. Mme. Popea's, for instance, struck one with a pervading sense of soiled dressing-gowns; Miss Bunter's was all primness, looking as if made to match the stiff wires of her canary cages. But this sunny little retreat, with all its bedroom suggestions curtained off, and cosy with piano and comfortable easy chairs and rugs, was essentially a lady's room that had assimilated some of the charm of its owner. By the time the gong went for *déjeuner*, Felicia was cheered and comforted, and she entered the dining-room, her arm around Katherine's waist, darting a rebellious glance at Frau Schultz.

The days went on uneventfully. The only incident was the return of old Mr. Chetwynd from a month's holiday in Italy, when the

whole pension united to do him honour and welcome him. On the day of his arrival Felicia laid a pair of slippers she had worked for him in his room, which delighted the old man so much that he came down to the salon in the evening to offer them for general admiration. But otherwise there was no departure, no arrival all the spring. Every one sighed for the summer and fresh faces. They looked forward with the longing that chrysalises must have for butterflydom. Felicia joined in the general anticipation. She had not forgotten Raine, though he gradually grew to be but a wistful memory. But she felt convinced, with the fervid conviction of twenty, that she could never love any man again.

The whole course of her thoughts was altered on one morning in May. The hour for *déjeuner* had been put earlier than usual, for some domestic reason, and the English post arrived during the meal. Mr. Chetwynd glanced over his envelopes, selected one, and courteously asked Katherine and Felicia permission to open it. His eyes sparkled as he read.

"I have had pleasant news," he said

radiantly, laying down the letter and addressing Mme. Boccard at the other end of the table. "My son is coming here for the first part of the Long Vacation."

There was a general chorus of satisfaction. Tongues were set on the wag. Mme. Popea and Frau Schultz conversed with simultaneous unmodulation. Mme Boccard explained volubly to Mr. Chetwynd the pleasure he would derive from his son's visit.

But all was a distant buzz in Felicia's ears. The announcement was like an electric shock, vivifying the fading love into instant life. Her heart gave a great leap, and things swam before her eyes, causing her to close them for a second. She opened them to a revelation—Katherine's face, which was as white as paper, and Katherine's eyes fixed upon her with an almost terrified intelligence. The exchanged glance told each the other's secret. But all was so sudden that only they two knew.

Katherine recovered her composure instantly, and the reaction brought the blood back into her cheeks. She said with a smile to the old man,—

"It will be charming to see Mr. Chetwynd again."

Felicia envied her. She could not have trusted her voice whatever had been at stake.

When they rose from the table, the old man motioned to Felicia to come with him on to the balcony, which ran continuously past the dining-room and salon windows.

"Is it not good news?"

She hung her head, and faltered out,—

"Yes."

"Will you still be glad to see Raine again?"

"You know—how can I tell you?"

"My dear child," he said, laying his hand on hers, as it rested on the iron balustrade, "do you know what I hope Raine is coming for?"

Felicia shook her head.

"Oh, I dare not think it—we must not speak of it. I don't think I shall be able to meet him."

"Can I help you?" asked the old man, tenderly. "You can tell an old man things without shame that you cannot tell a young

one. I have grown very fond of you, my child. To part with you would be a great wrench. And that this other should be has become one of the dearest wishes of my life."

"Ah! you are good—dear, and good, and kind," replied the girl; "but—"

"Well, perhaps you can explain a little enigma in Raine's letter!"

She looked up at him quickly. For the first time, her cheek flushed with a ray of hope.

"Can you explain this?" he asked, taking the letter from his pocket, and placing it so that they both could read as they leant over the balcony.

He pointed to a sentence.

"I am coming on my own account as well as yours. This, so that you should not be conceited, and think you are the only magnet in Geneva that draws

"Your loving

"RAINE."

"There!" he said, hastily withdrawing it. "Perhaps I ought not to have shown it to you. But Raine never talks idly; and I

have ventured to believe that Miss Felicia Graves is the magnet in question. Good-bye, my dear. I think I have committed enough indiscretion for one day."

She gave his hand a little caressing squeeze, and, when he had gone, remained a long time on the balcony, deep in troubled thoughts. Who was the magnet—she or Katherine?

She strove not to think of it, to busy herself with whatever interests she could find to hand. With this end in view, she took out for a long walk little Miss Bunter, who had been in low spirits for some days. She strove to cheer her. But Miss Bunter folded her drapery of depression all the more closely around her, and poured into Felicia's ears the history of her engagement with the man in Burmah.

"Our marriage has just been put off for another year," she said. "I thought I had come to the end of my waiting. But he can't afford it yet; and you have no idea how expensive living is there."

"Oh! I shouldn't have thought so," said Felicia.

"My dear!" said Miss Bunter, straightening her thin shoulders reproachfully, "Mr. Dotterel says so, and he has been living there fifteen years."

"It is strange that you have remained so fond of one another all this long time."

"Do you think so? Oh, no!" replied Miss Bunter, with a convinced shake of her head. "When one loves really, it lasts for ever. But," she added, sighing, "it has been a long engagement."

So Felicia parted with Miss Bunter rather more depressed than before. She had thought to get outside the range of such things, but she had been brought only the closer within it.

She could not sleep that night. Many things troubled her, causing her cheek to burn in the darkness—the sudden rekindling within her of feelings against which her young maiden pride had ever revolted; the shame at having revealed them for the second time; the hope suggested by Raine's letter, to which it seemed a joy and a humiliation to cling; the discovery of Katherine's love.

She buried her face in her pillow, trying to hide from herself her self-abasement. So does it happen to many women, when their sudden investiture of womanhood comes to them, with its thoughts and sorrows, and, unaware, they still regard it with the eyes of a young girl.

CHAPTER V.

THE PUZZLE OF RAINE CHETWYND.

"THEN you won't join us?" said the Junior Dean.

"I can't say definitely," replied Raine Chetwynd, rubbing his meerschaum bowl on his coat-sleeve.

"You had better," urged the other. "We can make our arrangements fit into yours, if you'll give us timely notice. Put aside a fortnight in July or August, and we will keep all the plums for then. You see we must have dates beforehand, on account of the guides."

"Quite so," Raine assented; "and it's very good of you, Rogers. But somehow I shouldn't care to tie myself down. I am not certain how long I may be likely to stay in Switzerland; and I have half promised the Professor to take him away somewhere, if he

has had enough of Geneva. No; you fellows make your own arrangements without reference to me. Tell me your dates, and I'll very probably happen upon you and take my chance of what's going."

The Junior Dean did not press the matter. Chetwynd was not a man to be governed by caprice, and doubtless had excellent reasons for not wishing to make a specific engagement. But Raine thought it necessary to apologize. He got up, and walked to the open window.

"Don't think me a disagreeable beast."

The Junior Dean laughed, and came and leant on the sill by his side.

"No one could be disagreeable on a day like this."

The window gave upon the College Gardens. The lawn was flooded with sunlight, save for the splashes of shade under the two flowering chestnut-trees. The fresh voices of some girls up for Commemoration rose through the quiet afternoon air; the faint tinkle of a piano was heard from some rooms in the grey pile on the left that stood cool in shadow.

The two men stood side by side for a long time without speaking, Raine leaning on his elbow, blowing great puffs of smoke that curled lazily outwards in the stillness, and the Junior Dean with his hands behind his back.

"We ought to be accounted happy," said the latter, meditatively. "This life of ours—"

"Yes, it approaches Euthanasia sometimes," replied Raine, allusively—"or it would, if one gave way to it."

"I can't see that," rejoined the other. "A life of scholarly ease is not death—the charm of it lies in its perfect mingling of cloistered seclusion with the idyllic. Here, for instance"—with a wave of a delicate hand—"is Arden without its discomforts."

"I am afraid I am not so 'deep-contemplative' as you," said Raine, with a smile, "and the idyllic always strikes me as a bit flimsy. I never could lie under a tree and pretend to read Theocritus. I'd sooner read Rabelais over a fire."

"I think you're ungrateful, Chetwynd. Where, out of Oxford—Cambridge, perhaps

—could you get a scene like this? And not the scene alone, but the subtle spirit of it? It seems always to me thought-haunted. We have grown so used to it that we do not appreciate sufficiently the perfect conditions around us for the development of all that is spiritual in us—apart from 'the windy ways of men.'"

"The 'windy ways of men' are very much better for us, if you ask me," replied Raine. "I mean 'men' really and not technically," he added, with a smile and a thought of undergraduate vanity.

"Ah, but with this as a haven of refuge—the grey walls, the cool cloisters, the peaceful charm of rooms like these looking out on to these beautiful, untroubled gardens."

"I don't know," said Raine. "Loving Oxford as I do, I sometimes breathe more freely out of it. There is too much intellectual *mise en scène* in all this. If you get it on your mind that you are expected to live up to it, you are rapidly qualifying yourself for the newest undergraduate culture-society, at a college that shall be nameless. Many a man is ruined by it."

"But, my dear Chetwynd," said the Junior Dean, "there is a difference between loving 'to walk the studious cloysters pale' and intellectual priggishness."

"Doubtless. But it isn't everyone who can walk honestly. The danger lies in finding another fellow doing the same. Then the two of you join together and say how beautiful it is, and you call in a third to share the sensation, and you proceed to admire yourselves as being vastly superior meditative persons. Then finally, according to modern instinct, you throw it into a Pale Cloyster Company, Limited, which is Anathema."

"Switzerland will do you good, Chetwynd," remarked the Junior Dean quickly. "Particularly as your mind is so disorganized as to misinterpret Milton."

Raine laughed, stretched himself lazily after the manner of big men, and lounged back on the window-sill, his hands in his pockets.

"I don't care. I'd misinterpret anybody —even you. I've had enough of Oxford for a time. You see I have had a long spell

since January. There were Entrance Scholarships and a lot of bursarial work for Evans to be done that kept me up nearly all the Easter vacation. I suppose you are right. I want a change."

"The mountain air would be better for you than a stuffy town."

"Oh, good gracious!" laughed Raine, swelling out his deep chest, "I am healthy enough. You don't presume to say I am pale with overwork!"

"No," said the Junior Dean, mentally contrasting his own spare form with his colleague's muscular development. "You have a constitution like an ox. But you would get better air into your lungs and better rest in your mind."

"Well, perhaps you are right," said Raine. "Anyhow, if Geneva gets too hot for me, I can come to you and sit on the top of the Jungfrau with some snow on my head and get cool."

The Junior Dean, in spite of his sentiment, was a man of the world, and he scented a metaphor in Raine's speech. He glanced at him keenly through his *pince-nez*. Where-

upon Raine burst out laughing and took him by the arm.

"Look here, are you going to put in an appearance at the St. John's garden-party?"

"Yes."

"Well, time is getting on. Let us go."

And on their way thither down the Broad, they discussed the Masonic Ball, the results of the Schools, the prospects of the cricket match, and kindred subjects, such as are dear to the hearts of dons in summer time.

The first person that Raine met at the Garden Party was his cousin, Mrs. Monteith. She skilfully disposed of a couple of pretty nieces she was chaperoning to some passing undergraduates, and walked up and down the lawn by his side.

She was a small, pretty, keen-faced woman, some two or three years his senior. Once upon a time she had fostered a conviction that Raine and herself had been born for one another, and had sought to share his soul's secrets. As long as she depended upon his initiative, all went well; but one day, having forced open a scrupulously locked apartment, she recoiled in pained surprise. Whereupon

she decided that she had mistaken the intentions of the Creator, and forthwith married Dr. Monteith, whose soul's secrets were as neatly docketed and catalogued as the slips of his unfinished Homeric Lexicon. But she always claimed a vested interest in Raine's welfare, which he, in a laughing, contented way, was pleased to allow.

"So you're off to Switzerland," she said. "What are you going to do there, besides seeing Uncle Louis?"

"Rest," he replied. "Live in a pension and rest."

"You'll find it dismally uninteresting. How long are you going to stay there?"

"Possibly most of the Long."

Mrs. Monteith opened her eyes and stopped twirling her parasol.

"My dear Raine! In Geneva?"

"My dear Nora, I really don't see anything in that to create such surprise. I've just had Rogers expressing himself on the subject. Why shouldn't I live in Geneva? What objection have you?"

"If you talk to me in that vehement way

you will make people fancy you are declaring a hopeless passion for me."

"Let them," said Raine, "they won't be greater fools than I am."

"What on earth do you mean?"

"Oh, don't be alarmed. I am not going to declare myself. I wonder whether you would laugh at me, if I told you something."

"It would depend whether it were funny or not."

"That would be a matter of opinion," he replied with a smile.

"Well, first let me know in what capacity I am to listen to it."

"As guide, philosopher, and friend," he said. "Let us get out of the way of these people. There are the Kennets bearing down upon us."

They found a garden seat in a secluded corner under a tree, and sat down. Mrs. Monteith laid her gloved fingers on his arm.

"Don't tell me it's about a woman, please."

"How did you know it's about a woman?"

"My dear boy, you wouldn't drag me to this sequestered wilderness if it were about a man! Of course it's a woman. You have it written all over your face. Well?"

"If you are not sympathetic I shan't tell you."

"Oh, Raine!"

She moved a little nearer to him, and settled her skirts. When a woman settles her skirts by a man's side it impresses him with a sense of confidential relations.

"Nora," he said, "when a man doesn't know whether he is in love or not, what is the best thing he can do?"

"The best thing is to make up his mind that he isn't. The next best is to find out."

"Then I am going to do the next best thing. I am going to Geneva to find out."

"And how long have you been like this?"

"Since January."

"Why didn't you tell me before?"

"Because I did not relish telling it to myself. Now I have acknowledged it, I have been pulling the petals off the marguerite,

in a kind of inverse way, for months, and the pastime has palled. The dear old man thinks I am going solely for his sake, and I feel rather a humbug. But of course—well—"

"Most of us are."

"What?"

"Humbugs," replied the lady sweetly. "Come, honour bright. Don't you know whether you are in love or not?"

"No."

"Would you like to be?"

"I don't quite know. That's the irritating part about it."

"Oh, I see! Then it's a question of the lady's desirability. Oh, Raine, I know these pensions. I hope it isn't a Polish countess with two poodles and a past. Tell me, what is she like?"

"Well, to tell you the truth," he replied, with a strange conjuncture of a humorous twinkle in his eyes and a deprecatory smile, "it is impossible to say."

"Why?"

"Because she isn't one, but two."

"Two what?"

"Two individuals."

"And you don't know which one to fall in love with?"

Raine nodded, lounging with arms extended along the back of the seat.

Mrs. Monteith looked at him in silence for a few moments, and then broke into rippling laughter.

"This is delicious. *Θέλω, θέλω φιλῆσαι,* like the warrior in Anacreon!"

"Don't quote, Nora," said Raine. "It is one of your bad habits. You are trying enough with your list of first lines of Horace; but you know nothing at all about Anacreon."

"I do!" she cried, wheeling round to face him. "Joshua was correcting the proofs of his edition during our honeymoon. I used to make him translate them—it was a way of getting him to make love to me. There! Now I'll repeat it: *Θέλω, θέλω φιλῆσαι· ἔπειθ' Ἔρως φιλεῖν με.* Oh, my dear Raine, it is too delicious! You, of all people in the world!"

"Then your verdict is that I am supremely ridiculous?"

"I am afraid I must say it strikes me in that light."

"Thanks," said Raine serenely. "That was what I was trying to get at. I have been jesting a little, but there is a substratum of truth in my confession. You confirm me in my own opinion—I am supremely ridiculous. I like to make certain of things. It is so futile to have this complicated state of mind —I hate it."

"Do you?" said Mrs. Monteith. "How different from a woman; there is nothing she enjoys more."

After Raine had taken her back to her charges, he remained to exchange a few civilities with the St. John's people and their wives, and then strolled back to his own college. He mounted his staircase, with a smile on his lips, recalling his conversation with his cousin. How far had he been in earnest? He could scarcely tell. Certainly both Katherine and Felicia had attracted him during his Christmas visit. He had been thrown into more intimate contact with them than he usually was with women. Perhaps that was the reason that they stood out dis-

tinct against the half-known feminine group whom he was accustomed to meet at the crowded afternoon receptions to which Oxford society is addicted. Perhaps, too, the fact of his going from Oxford, where men are a glut in the market, to the Pension Boccard, where they are at an extravagant premium, had something to do with it. Some unsuspected index in his robust organization was sensitive to the sudden leap in values. Whatever was the reason, he retained a vivid impression of the two personalities, and, as he had written to his father—in the same half-jesting strain as he had talked with his cousin—he found himself bound to admit that filial duty was not the only magnet that attracted him to Geneva. As for his disinclination to bind himself to a definite mountaineering engagement with Rogers and his party, he was glad of these nebulous fancies as affording him a conscientious reason. The Junior Dean was an excellent fellow and an Alpine enthusiast, but he was apt to be academic, even on the top of the Jungfrau.

These considerations were running lightly

through his mind as he sat down to his desk to finish off some tutorial work before dinner, in the little inner room which he made his sanctuary, whither undergraduates only penetrated for strictly business purposes. The outer keeping-room was furnished with taste and comfort for the general eye, but here Raine kept such things as were nearly connected with his own life. As he wrote, he idly took up an ivory paper-knife in his left hand, and pressed it against his cheek.

He paused to think, looked mechanically at the paper-knife, and then lost himself in a day-dream. For the bit of ivory had taken him back many years—to the days when he had just entered on his manhood.

He started, threw down his pen, and leant back in his chair, a shadow of earnestness over his face.

"That was the boy," he said, half aloud. "What would it be for the man? If this foolishness is serious—as the other—"

And, after a few seconds, he clapped both hands down on the leather arms of his chair.

"It *is* both equally—it must be—I'll

swear that it is ! And so there's nothing in it."

He pushed aside his unfinished schedule, and took a sheet of note-paper from the stationery-case.

"My dear Nora," he wrote, "I have been thinking you may have misunderstood my rubbish this afternoon. So don't think I propose anything so idiotic as a search for a wife. Remember there are two, and there is safety in numbers. If you will go over to Geneva and make a third attraction, you may be absolutely unconcerned as to the safety of

"Your affectionate cousin,

"Raine Chetwynd."

When he had tossed the letter into the tray for the next post, he felt relieved, and went on with his work.

But the next morning he received a note by hand from Mrs. Monteith, which he tore up wrathfully into little pieces and threw into the waste-paper basket.

It ran :—

"My dear Raine,—Men are the funniest

creatures! I laughed over your letter till I cried.

"Your affectionate cousin,

"NORA MONTEITH."

Which shows how a woman can know your mind from a sample, when you yourself are in doubt with the whole piece before you.

CHAPTER VI.

SUMMER CHANGES.

From the moment of mutual revelation, the relations between Katherine and Felicia underwent a change, not the less appreciable for being subtle. This was inevitable. In fact, Felicia had dreaded the first confidential talk as much as she dreaded the arrival of Raine. But these things are infinitely simpler than we are apt to imagine, by reason of the mere habit of human intercourse. The hours that they spent together at first, passed outwardly as pleasantly as before. But Katherine was more reserved, limited the conversation as much as possible to the ephemeral concrete, and Felicia, keeping a guard over herself, lost somewhat in simplicity of manner. Imperceptibly, however, they drifted apart, and saw less of one another. A tendency

towards misjudgment of Katherine was a necessary consequence of the sense of indelicacy under which the girl chafed. The rare utterances of feeling or opinion that the other gave vent to, instead of awakening her sympathy, aroused undefined instincts of antagonism. She sought the old scholar's society more and more, boldly put into execution a project she had long rather tremulously contemplated, and established herself as his amanuensis.

When he saw her, with inky fingers and ruffled hair, copying out his crabbed manuscript, he would thank her for her self-sacrifice. But Felicia would look up fervently and shake her head.

"You can't tell what a blessed relief it is, Mr. Chetwynd."

So the old man accepted her services gratefully ; though, if the truth were known, the trained man of letters, who was accustomed to do everything himself with minute care, was sorely put to it at times as to how to occupy his fair secretary—especially as she, with the conscientiousness of her sex, insisted on scrupulously filling up every

moment of the time she devoted to his service.

But Katherine smiled sadly and comprehendingly at Felicia's ingenuous strategical movement.

"It seems rather a pity you never thought of it before," she said, one day, kindly. "Regular occupation is a great blessing; it prevents one from growing lackadaisical."

"Yes," replied Felicia, falling in with her tone; "I am afraid I was beginning to get into evil ways."

With the advent of summer, there was much bustle in the pension, bringing relations into greater harmony. The chatter of millinery filled the air. Ladies ran up against each other in shops, rendered mutual advice, and grew excited over the arrival of each other's parcels.

"One touch of *chiffon* makes the whole world kin," said Katherine, who looked upon matters with a satirical, yet kindly eye.

She was drawn perforce into the movement, being consulted on all sides as to

matching of shades and the suitability of hats. She bought outright an entire wardrobe for Miss Bunter, who begged her to go shopping with her, and then sat helpless by the counter, fingering mountains of materials. Even Frau Schultz was softened. But she was the only one who did not consult Katherine. She took Felicia into her confidence, and exhibited, among other seasonable vestments, a blood-coloured blouse, covered with mauve spots as large as two-franc pieces, which she pronounced to be very genteel. Every one had something new to wear for the summer. Mme. Popea scattered scraps of stuff about her room, in a kind of libationary joy. The little dressmaker, bristling with pins, haunted the landings, when not within the little cabinet assigned to her, from outside whose door could be unceasingly heard the sharp tearing of materials and the droning buzz of the sewing-machine.

Summer changes took place in the pension itself. The storey above, which was let unfurnished during the winter, was incorporated, as usual, into the general estab-

lishment. There was a week of cleaning, during which the house was given over to men in soft straw hats and blue blouses. And then a week of straightening, when new curtains were put up, and floors re-waxed, and dingy coverings removed from chairs and sofas, which burst out resplendent in bright green velvet. The latter proceedings were superintended by an agile young man in alpaca sleeves and green baize apron. It was the summer waiter, who had emerged from the mysterious limbo where summer waiters hibernate, and was resuming his duties, apparently at the point he had left them at the end of the previous season. Mme. Boccard and he conversed at vast distances, which was trying to those who did not see how the welfare of the pension was being thereby furthered. In her quiet moments, the good lady was busy sending out prospectuses and answering replies to advertisements and applications. She went about smiling perspiringly at the prospect of a successful season.

The first new guests to arrive were M. le Commandant Pornichon and his wife. He

was a stout-hearted old Gascon, a veteran of Solferino and Gravelotte, who talked in a great voice and with alarming gestures of blood and battles, and obeyed his little brown wife like a lamb. His friend, Colonel Cazet, was coming with his wife later on. For some years they had been regular summer boarders of Mme. Boccard. The next arrival was a middle-aged man, called Skeogh, who had commercial business in Geneva. At the first he caused disappointment through adding up figures in a little black book at meal times. But Frau Schultz found him a most superior person, after listening to a confidential account of the jute market, in which commodity she seemed to have been vaguely interested at one period of her life. Whereupon she talked to him about Löttchen, and he put away the black book.

"*Quelle Sirène!*" cried Mme. Popea, in wicked exultation.

The next to come was Raine Chetwynd. The old man went to the railway-station in the morning to meet him, and bore him back in triumph.

"Oh, Raine, my dear, dear boy," he said,

watching him consuming the coffee and *petit pain* he had ordered up to his room, "you can't tell how I have longed to see you again."

"Well, you shall not exile yourself any longer," said Raine, heartily. "I am going to carry you back to Oxford. The place is a howling wilderness without you. If I could remember the names of all who sent appealing messages to you, it would be a list as long as Leporello's. And you mustn't live away from me again, dad."

"No," replied the old man; "but you see I couldn't have done this work as well in Oxford, could I?"

"It's a noble work," said Raine, with the scholar's instinct.

"Yes," replied the old man with a sigh; "it wanted doing, it wanted doing. And I think I have done it very well."

"I must overhaul your scrip, while I am here. Let me have a look at it."

"Don't bother about it yet, my boy. Finish your coffee. Let me ring for some more. You must be tired after your long journey."

"Tired?" laughed Raine. "Oh dear no, and I can go on quite well till breakfast. I only want to see what kind of stuff you have been doing since I have been away."

The professor went to his drawer and pulled out the manuscript, his heart glowing at Raine's loving interest in his work—a never-failing source of pride and comfort.

"Here it is, nearly finished."

Raine took the scrip from him and turned over the pages, with a running commentary on the scope within which the subject was treated. At last he uttered an exclamation of surprise, laid the book on his knee and looked up at his father.

"Hullo! what is all this?"

The old man peeped over his shoulder.

"That is my secretary's writing," he explained; "Miss Graves, you remember her, don't you?"

"Of course; but—"

"Well, she will insist upon it, Raine; she comes in for a couple of hours a day. It pleases her, really, and I can't help it."

"What a dear little soul she must be," said Raine.

"Ah! she is, my boy; every day she seems to wind a fresh thread round my heart. We shall have to take her back to Oxford with us, eh, Raine?"

He laughed softly, took up the manuscript and put it tenderly away again in the drawer, while Raine lit his pipe. The latter did not suspect the hint that his father had meant to convey, but he took advantage of the short pause that followed to change the conversation.

It was Mme. Boccard's arrangement that Raine should take Katherine's place next to his father, and thus have her as his neighbour. It would disappoint M. le Professeur if he were separated from his *petite amie*, Miss Graves, and she was sure that Mrs. Stapleton would not mind.

"Make any arrangement you please," Katherine had replied, with some demureness.

Whereupon Mme. Boccard thanked her, and wished that everybody was as gentle and easy to deal with, and Katherine had smiled inwardly, at the same time despising herself a little for doing so, as is the way with women.

As for Felicia, the disposition of seats caused her painful embarrassment. She dared not look at Katherine, lest she should read the welcome in her eyes ; she dared not look at Raine, lest the trouble in her own should betray her. She kept them downcast, listening to Raine's voice with a burning cheek and beating heart. Only when the meal was over, and the old man detained her in conversation by the window, and Raine came up to them, did she summon up courage to meet his glance fully.

"So the professor has caught you in his dusty web, Miss Graves," he said, smiling. "You were very sweet to let yourself be caught."

"Oh ! I walked in of my own accord, I assure you," replied Felicia, "and you have no idea what trouble I had. He wants to dismiss me at the present moment. Do plead for me, Mr. Chetwynd. Of course, I know I should be in the way in the professor's room now—oh ! yes, I should, that is quite settled—but I want him to give me something to do by myself."

"I will try my best for you, Miss Graves,"

said Raine; "but you don't know what an unnatural, hard-hearted—"

"Oh, Mr. Chetwynd!" said Felicia.

"Well, my dear," said the old man, "you must have your way. "It was only for your own sake I suggested it. I am always so afraid of making you weary—and it is very, very dry stuff—but your help is invaluable, my dear. It will be the same as usual, then. Only I think I shall cut down the time to half, as I, too, am going to be lazy now."

"Now you will see what real laziness is, Miss Graves," said Raine. "Do you know my father's idea of leisure?—what remains of a day after nine hours' work. Seven he calls laziness; six is abject sloth."

"Ah! not now, Raine," said the old man, "not now."

He turned to go. The two younger people's eyes met, both touched by the same thing—the pathos of old age that sounded in the old man's words.

"How you must love him!" said Felicia, in a low voice.

"I do," replied Raine, earnestly; "and

it makes me happy to see that he has not been unloved during my absence. I feel more about what you have done for him than I can say."

He smiled, involuntarily put out his hand, and pressed hers that she gave him. Then they parted, he to follow his father, she to go to her room serener and happier than she had been for many days, and to weave a wondrous web out of a few gracious words, a smile, and a pressure of the hand. If it were possible—if it were only possible! There would be no shame then—or only just that of it to raise joy with a leaven of tremulousness.

Meanwhile Raine sat in his father's room, and continued the interrupted gossip. But towards three o'clock the old man's eyes grew heavy, as he leaned his head back in the arm-chair. He struggled to keep them open for Raine's sake, but at last the latter rose with a smile.

"Why, you are sleepy, dad!"

"Yes," murmured the old man, apologetically. "It's a new habit I have contracted—I must break myself of it gradually.

I suppose I am getting old, Raine. You won't think it unkind of me, will you? Just forty winks, Raine."

"Have your nap out comfortably," said the young man.

He fetched a footstool, arranged a cushion with singular tenderness behind the old man, and left him to his sleep. Then he went out for a stroll through the town.

It was a hot, sunny day. At the end of the street, the gate of the Jardin Anglais stood invitingly open. Raine entered, and came upon the enclosed portion of the Quai that forms the promenade, pleasant with its line of shady seats under the trees on one side, and the far-stretching lake on the other. He paused for awhile, and leant over the balustrade to light a cigarette and to admire the view—the cloudless sky, the deep-blue water flecked with white sails, the imposing mass of the hotels on the Quai du Mont Blanc, the busy life on the bridge, beneath which the Rhone flows out of the lake. He drew in a long breath. Somehow it was more exhilarating than his college gardens. The place was not crowded, as the tourist season had not

yet set in. But the usual number of nurses and children scattered themselves promiscuously along the path, and filled the air with shrill voices. Raine, continuing his stroll, had not gone many steps when he perceived, far ahead, a lady start from her seat and run to pick up a child that had fallen down. On advancing farther, he saw that it was Mrs. Stapleton, who had got the child on her knees and was tenderly wiping the little gravel-scratched hands, while the nurse, who had come up, stood by phlegmatic.

It was a pretty sight, instinct with feminine charm, and struck gratefully on the man's senses. Katherine looked very fresh and delicate in her sprigged lilac blouse, plain serge skirt, and simple black straw hat, and the attitude in which she bent down to the chubby, tearful face under the white sunbonnet was very graceful and womanly. She kissed the child and handed it to its nurse as Raine came up. She greeted him with a smile.

"Quite a catastrophe—but she will forget all about it in half an hour. It must be delightful to be a child."

"If all hurts are so promptly and tenderly

healed, I should think it must be," said Raine.

"Thank you," she said, with an upward glance; "that is a pretty compliment."

Raine bowed, laughed his acknowledgments, and with a word of request, sat down by her side.

"Is this a haunt of yours?" he asked.

"Yes, I suppose it is. It is so near the pension—and I love the open air."

"So do I. That is another point of contact. We discovered a good many, if you remember, at Christmas. What have you been doing since then?"

"Forgetting a good many old lessons, and trying to teach myself a few new ones. Or, if you like, making bricks without straw—trying to live a life without incidents."

"Which less epigrammatically means that you have had a dull, cheerless time. I am sorry. You have been here all the winter and spring?"

"Yes. Where else should I have been?"

"In a happier place," said Raine. "You don't seem made to lead this monotonous existence."

"Oh! I suppose I am, since I am leading it. Human beings, like water, find their own level. The Pension Boccard seems to be mine."

"You smile, as if you liked it," he said, rather puzzled.

"Would you have me cry to you?"

"Perhaps not on the day of my coming, but afterwards, I wish you would."

She flashed a glance at him, the lightning reconnoitre of woman ever on the defensive. But the sight of his strong, frank face and kind eyes reassured her. She was silent for a moment, dreaming a vivid day-dream. She was taking him at his word, crying with her face on his shoulder and his arm around her. It was infinite comfort. But she quickly roused herself.

"Don't you know your Burton? A kind man once pointed it out to me—'As much pity is to be taken of a woman weeping, as of a goose going barefoot.' It was the same that told me a woman cried to hide her feelings."

"That kind of epigram can be made like match-boxes at twopence farthing a gross," said Raine, impatiently. "You have only

to dress up an old adage with a mask of spite."

"You haven't changed," she said with a smile. "You are just the same as when you left."

"More so," he said, enigmatically. "Much more so. Then I thought it would do you good to cry. Now I wish you would. I suppose it seems odd I should say this to you. You must forgive me."

"But why should I cry when I have no trouble?" she asked, disregarding his apology. "Besides, I don't go about bewailing my lot in life. Do you think I am unhappy?"

"Yes," he replied, bluntly, "I do. I'll tell you what made me first think so. It was at the theatre at Christmas, when we saw 'Denise.' I was watching your face in repose."

"It is a painful play," she said, quietly, but her lip quivered a little, and a faint flush came into her cheek. "Besides, I was very happy that evening."

He was sitting sideways on the bench, watching her with some earnestness; she

was drawing scrawls on the gravel with the point of her parasol. Both started when they heard a harsh voice addressing them.

"Ach! You are here. Is it not a beautiful afternoon?"

It was Frau Schultz who spoke. Felicia was by her side. Raine rose to his feet, took off his hat, and uttered a pleasant commonplace of greeting. But Frau Schultz put her hand on Felicia's arm and moved away.

"We will not detain you. I am going to the dentist, and Miss Graves is accompanying me."

So Raine lifted his hat again and resumed his seat.

"That is rough on Miss Graves," he said, watching their retiring figures and noting the contrast between the girl's slim waist and the elder woman's broad, red and mauve spotted back. "But she is a sweet-natured girl. Isn't she?"

"Yes," assented Katherine. "He will be a happy man who wins her."

"You are right there," he replied in his downright way, unconscious of the question-

ing pain that lay behind the woman's calm grey eyes. "Few people, I should think, could know her without loving her. It is touching to see the relations between herself and my father."

"You will see a great deal of her, for that reason."

"I hope so," he said, brightly.

Again Katherine kept down the question that struggled to leap into her eyes. There was a short silence, during which she turned idly over the leaves of the book that was in her lap. It was "Diana of the Crossways."

"A noble book," he said, glancing at the title. "But I never quite understand how Diana sold the secret."

"No?" said Katherine, "I think I can tell you."

And so she gave him of her woman's knowledge of her sex, and the time passed pleasantly, till she judged it prudent to bid him farewell.

CHAPTER VII.

KATHERINE'S HOUR.

"ACH so!" said Frau Schultz as soon as they were out of earshot, "she has begun already. It is not decent. In a little while he will become quite entangled."

Felicia looked away and did not speak. The other went on,—

"She might have waited a fortnight, a week, and done it gradually. But the very first day—"

"Please don't let us discuss it," said Felicia wearily.

"But I will discuss it; I am a virtuous woman, and I don't like to see such things. He is too good to fall a victim. I shall speak to the professor."

"Do you think a gentleman like the professor would listen to you, Frau

Schultz?" asked Felicia, scarcely veiling her disgust.

This was a new idea to Frau Schultz. She turned it over with some curiosity, and metaphorically sniffed at it. Then she left it alone, to Felicia's relief, and the rest of their conversation passed without allusion to the subject.

But her comments upon the meeting in the Jardin Anglais made an unpleasant impression upon the girl, revived the memory of the previous indictment of Katherine which she had rebutted with such indignation. But now, she could not regard Katherine with the same feelings of loyalty. On the contrary, the growing distrust and antagonism seemed to have come to a head. The instinct of combat was aroused in her for the first time, and she began to dislike Katherine with a younger woman's strong, active dislike.

Unconsciously to herself, the atmosphere of the pension had tainted the purity of her judgment. She had learned that little knowledge of things evil which is so dangerous. Katherine was not to her merely

a rival, loving Raine Chetwynd with a fair, pure love like her own, but a scheming woman, one of those to whom love is a pastime, occupation, vanity—she knew not what—but still a thing unhonoured and conferring no honour on the man. And, as the days went on, this attitude became more definite, gaining stability in measure as the woman within her took the place of the child. The thought, too, took shape: why should she not use maidenly means to keep him by her side, when Katherine used unworthy ones? And with the thought her ashamedness wore off, and she began to battle bravely for her love.

Katherine could not help noticing these signs of active rivalry. At first she was hurt. She would have dearly liked to retain Felicia's friendship. But what could she do?

She was in her room one morning when the sound of a carriage drawing up in the street below, struck upon her ear. Out of idle curiosity she stepped upon the little balcony and looked down. Old Mr. Chetwynd, Raine and Felicia were going out for

a drive. She watched them settle themselves laughingly in their places, and smiled not unkindly at Felicia's young radiant face. But as they drove off, Felicia glanced up, caught sight of her, and the expression changed. Its triumph smote Katherine with a sense of pain. She retired from the balcony wearily. A vague fancy came to her to go away from Geneva, to leave the field open for Felicia. She dallied with it for a moment. And then the fierce reaction set in.

No. A thousand times no. Why should she be quixotic? Whoever in the world had acted quixotically towards her? Her life had been wrecked—up to now, without one gleam of light in any far-off haven. She had been tossed about by the waves, an idle derelict. Only lately had hope come. It was a wild, despairing hope, at the best—but it had kept her alive for the past six months. Why should she give way to this young girl—untouched, untroubled save by this one first girlish fancy? All the world was before her, waiting with its tributes to throw at the feet of her youth and fairness and charm. In a few months she would go out into it again,

leave the Pension Boccard and its narrowing life for ever. In a year it would be but a memory, Raine Chetwynd but a blushing episode. Many men would love her. She would have her pick of the noblest. Why should she herself then yield her single frail hope to her who had so many fair ones?

She clung with passionate insistence to this self-justification. Since her lot of loneliness had fallen upon her, she had accepted it implicitly, never sought to form ties of even the most delicate and ephemeral nature. She had contemplated the grey, loveless, lonely stretch of future years as the logical consequence of the past, and sometimes its stern inevitableness crushed her. Life for life, which had the greater need of joy—her own or that of the young girl? The law of eternal justice seemed to ring answer in her heart—as it has rung in the heart of every daughter of Hagar since the world began.

Late that evening she was standing on the balcony outside the salon. They had passed a merry evening. A concert-singer

from London, who had arrived the day before, had good-naturedly sung for them. Old Mr. Chetwynd had been witty and charming. Commandant Pornichon had told, with Gascon verve, stories of camp and war. Raine had talked and laughed in his whole-hearted way. Everyone had been gay, good-tempered. Felicia had been in buoyant mood, adding her fresh note to the talk ; had even addressed to her a few laughing words. One by one all had left the salon. The last had been Mme. Popea, who had remained for a quiet chatter with her about the events of the evening. She was alone now, in the moonlight, feeling less at war with herself than during the day. Laughter and song are good for the heart. She leant her cheek on her elbow and mused. Perhaps she was a wicked woman to try to come between a girl and her happiness. After all, would not the sacrifice of self be a noble thing?

But suddenly she heard the salon door open and an entering footstep that caused her heart to leap within her. With an incontrollable impulse she moved and showed herself at the window.



She loved to hear him talk.

"How delightful to find you!" exclaimed Raine. "I came almost on a forlorn hope."

"I stayed to sentimentalize a little in the moonlight," said Katherine. "I thought you had gone to the *café*."

"No; I have been sitting with my father," he said, pulling a chair on to the balcony and motioning her to it. "And then, when I left him, I thought it would be pleasant to talk to you—so I came. I have not had a word with you all day."

"I have missed our argument too," admitted Katherine. "So you had a pleasant expedition?"

"Very," said Raine. But I wished you had been there."

"You had your father and Felicia."

"That was the worst of it," he said laughingly. "They are so much in love with one another, that I was the third that makes company nought."

He talked about the drive to Vevey, the habits and customs of the Swiss, digressed into comparisons between the peasant classes of various countries. Katherine, who had wandered over most of the beaten track in

Europe, supplied his arguments with illustrations. She loved to hear him talk. His knowledge was wide and accurate, his criticisms vigorous. The strength of his intellectual fibre alone differentiated him, in her eyes, from ordinary men. His vision was so clear, his touch upon all subjects so firm, and yet, at need, so delicate; she felt herself so infinitely little of mind compared with him. They talked on till past midnight; but long ere that the conversation had drifted around things intimately subjective.

As they parted for the night at the end of Katherine's corridor, she could not help saying to him somewhat humbly,—

"Thank you for the talks. You do not know how I value them. They lift me into a different atmosphere."

Raine looked at her a little wonderingly. Her point of view had never occurred to him. Thoroughly honest and free from vanity of every kind, he could not even now quite comprehend it.

"It is you who raise me," he replied. "To talk with you is an education in all fine and

delicate things. How many women do you think there are like you?"

His words rang soothingly in her ear until she slept. In the morning she seemed to wake to a newer conception of life.

And as the days went by, and their talks alone together on the balcony, in the Jardin Anglais, and where not, deepened in intimacy, and the nature of the man she loved unfolded itself gradually like a book before her perceptive feminine vision, this conception broadened into bolder, clearer definition. Hitherto she had been fiercely maintaining her inalienable right to whatever chance of happiness offered itself in her path. Now she felt humbled, unworthy, a lesser thing than he, and her abasement brought her a sweet, pure happiness. At first she had loved him, she scarce knew why, because he was he, because her heart had leapt towards him. But now the self-chastening brought into being a higher love, tender and worshipping, such as she had dreamed over in a lonely woman's wistful reveries. She lost the sense of rivalry with Felicia, strove in

unobtrusive ways to win back her friendship. But Felicia, sweet and effusive to others, to Katherine remained unapproachable.

At last a great womanly pity arose in Katherine's heart. The victory that she was ever becoming more conscious of gaining awakened all her generous impulses and tendernesses. Her love for Raine had grown too beautiful a thing to allow of unworthy thrills of triumph.

For the rest, it was a happy sunlit time. The past faded into dimness. She lived from day to day blinded to all but the glowing radiance of her love.

Raine met her one day going with a basket on her arm up the streets of the old town by the cathedral. He had fallen into the habit of joining her with involuntary unceremoniousness when she was alone, and it did not occur to her as anything but natural that he should join her now and walk by her side. At the door of the basement where Jean-Marie and his wife dwelt, she paused.

"This is the end of my journey. My old people live here."

"I am quite envious of them," said Raine.

He had scarcely spoken, when the old woman hobbled across the road from one of the opposite houses, and came up to Katherine with smiling welcome in the wrinkles of her old, lined face.

She had not expected madame so soon after her last visit. It was Jean-Marie who was going to be happy. Would Madame enter? And Monsieur? Was he the brother of Madame?

Katherine explained, with a bright flush on either cheek and a quick little glance of embarrassment at Raine, who laughed and added his word of explanation. He was a great friend of Madame's. She had often spoken to him of Jean-Marie.

The old woman looked at him, the eternal feminine in her not dulled by years, and liked his smiling face.

"If I could dare to ask Monsieur if he would condescend to enter with Madame—?"

He sought a permissive glance from Katherine, and accepted the invitation.

"I did not mean—" began Katherine in a low voice as they were following the old woman down the dark stairs.

"It will delight me," replied Raine. "Besides, I shall envy them no longer."

After a few moments her embarrassment wore off, as she saw the old paralytic's first Swiss shyness melt away under Raine's charm. It was Raine's way, as the old professor had said once to Felicia, to get behind externals and to set himself in sympathy with all whom he met. And Katherine, though she had not heard this formulated, felt the truth unconsciously. He talked as if he had known Jean-Marie from infancy. To listen to him one would have thought it was the simplest thing in the world to entertain an ignorant old Swiss peasant. Katherine had never loved him so much as she did that hour.

She was full of the sense of it when they were in the street again—of his tenderness, simplicity, human kindness.

"How they adore you!" he said suddenly.

The words and tone startled her. The aspect she herself had presented was the last thing in her thoughts. The tribute, coming from him in the midst of her silent

adoration of him himself, brought swiftly into play a range of complex feelings and the tears to her eyes. He could not help noticing their moisture.

"What a tender heart you have!" he said in his kind way, falling into inevitable error.

"It is silly of me," she replied with a bright smile.

She could not undeceive him. Often a woman by reason of her sex has to receive what she knows is not her due. But she compensates the eternal justice of things by giving up more of her truest self to the man. A few moments later, however, on their homeward walk, she tried to be conscientious.

"I cannot bear you to praise me—as you do sometimes."

"Why?"

A man, even the most sympathetic, is seldom satisfied unless he has reasons for everything. Katherine, in spite of her seriousness, smiled at the masculine directness. She replied somewhat earnestly,—

"Because I do not deserve it in the first place, and in the second, it means so much more, coming from you."

"I said that those old folks adore you, and that you are tender-hearted," he answered conclusively; "and both facts are true, and it would be a bad day for anyone but yourself who gainsaid them."

CHAPTER VIII.

A POOR LITTLE TRAGEDY.

"Of the development of human phenomena, two truisms may be stated. First, a man can seldom gauge its progress, the self of to-day differing so infinitely little from the self of yesterday. And secondly, the climax is seldom reached by a man's own initiative. He seems blindly and unconsciously to depend upon that law of averages which assigns an indefinite number of external contingencies to act upon and to complete any given process."

Raine had jotted down this among some rough notes for a series of lectures in Metaphysics he was preparing, when his father's voice broke a silence that had lasted nearly an hour.

"I am reading that letter you wrote to me."

"Which letter?" asked Raine.

As the old man did not reply at first, but continued reading the letter which he held out before him, Raine closed his note-book, and went round behind his father's chair, and looked over his shoulder.

"Oh, that one. You must have thought me idiotic. I half fancy I did it to puzzle you."

"I wasn't puzzled, my dear boy. I guessed. And does the magnet still attract?"

It was the first time he had referred to the matter. His voice was a little husky as he asked the question—it seemed to be a liberty that he was taking with Raine. He looked up at him deprecatingly, touching the hand that was on his shoulder.

"Don't think me an inquisitive old man," he added, smiling to meet the affectionate look on his son's face.

"Yes, I am attracted—very much," said Raine. "More than I had conceived possible."

"I am so glad—she too is drawn to you, Raine."

"I think so too—sometimes. At others she baffles me."

"You would like to know for certain?"

"Of course," said Raine with a laugh. There seemed a humorous side to the discussion. The loved old face wore an expression of such concern.

"Then, Raine—if you really love her—I can tell you—she has given you her heart, my son. I had it from her own lips."

The laugh died away from Raine's eyes. With a quick movement, he came from behind his father and stood facing him, his brows knitted.

"What do you mean, father?" he asked very earnestly.

"Felicia—she is only waiting, Raine."

"Felicia!"

"Yes. Who else?"

Raine passed his hand through his hair and walked to and fro about the room, his hands dug deep in his pockets. The old man followed him with his eyes, anxiously, not comprehending.

Suddenly Raine stopped short before him.

"Father, I haven't been a brute. I

haven't trifled with her. I never suspected it. I liked her for her own sake, because she is a bright, likeable girl—and I am fond of her for your sake. But I have never, to my knowledge, led her to suppose—believe me."

And then the old man saw his plans for Raine's future fall in desolation round him like a house of cards.

"I don't understand," he said rather piteously, "if she is the attraction—"

"It is not little Felicia."

"Ah!" said the old man, with the bitter pang of disappointment.

He rested his head on his hand, dejectedly.

"I had set my heart upon it. That was why, the first day you came, I spoke of her coming back to Oxford with us. Poor little girl! Heaven knows what will happen to her, when I tell her."

"Tell her! You mustn't do that, dad. She must learn it for herself. It will be best for her. I will be very careful—very careful—she will see—and her pride will come to her help. I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll go away—for an indefinite time. Rogers and

three men are climbing in Switzerland. I shall pack up my things and go and join them to-morrow; I have a list of their dates."

He searched for it among the papers in his pocket-book:

"Chamonix! Their being so close will be a good excuse. When I come back—it will only be for a short time—this break will make it easier to modify my attitude."

"Let us think what would be best," said the professor with an old man's greater slowness of decision.

"I have made up my mind," said Raine. "I go to-morrow."

Just then a rap was heard at the door, and a moment afterwards Felicia appeared, bringing her daily task of copy. She handed the professor the manuscript—and while he looked through it mechanically, she stood like a school-girl before her master, with clasped hands, waiting pleasurably for the little word of praise.

"There is going to be a specially gorgeous *fête* on the lake to-night, Mr. Chetwynd," she said brightly, turning to Raine.

"Won't it be like the other one?"

"Oh, much more so! There is a royal Duke of somewhere or other staying at the National, and the municipality mean to show him what they can do. I am so fond of these *fêtes renétiennes.* You're coming, aren't you, professor?"

"I don't know, my dear," replied the old man. "The night air isn't good for me." Then he added, closing the manuscript, "It is beautifully done. I shall grudge giving it to the printers."

"But you'll get it all back again," said Felicia. "Send it to me afterwards, and I'll bind it up beautifully with blue ribbon."

She gave them each a little nod of farewell and tripped lightly out of the room. The two men looked at each other, rather sadly.

"Oh, Raine—is it too late? Couldn't you?"

"No, dad," said Raine. "I am afraid other things are too serious."

Later in the day he opened his note-book and his eye fell upon the last fragment he had scribbled. He threw it upon his dressing-table with an exclamation of im-

patience. The personal application of his aphorisms was too sudden and obvious to be pleasant.

There was no doubt now in his mind as to the face that attracted him to Geneva. It had vanished on the first day of his arrival, when he had seen Katherine comforting the hurt child. He was conscious too that it had been Katherine all along, at Oxford, whose memory had haunted him, that he had only evoked that of Felicia in order to enable him to deceive himself. He had practised the self-delusion systematically, whenever his thoughts had drifted away from the work and interests that surrounded him. He had made light of the matter, treated it jestingly, grown angry when it obtruded itself seriously on his thoughts. For he had shrunk, with the instinctive fear of a man of strong nature, from exposing to the touch a range of feelings which had once brought him great sorrow. To love meant to bring into play a man's emotions, infinitely deeper than those of a boy, and subject to far more widely-reaching consequences. For this reason he had mocked at the idea of being in love with Katherine,

had forced himself, since the power that drew him to Geneva could not be disregarded, to consider Felicia as an equal component, and at the time of his light confidence to Mrs. Monteith, had almost persuaded himself that he was indulging in a whimsical holiday fancy.

But he could delude himself no longer. From the first meeting he knew that it was not the young girl, but the older, deeper-natured woman that had stirred him. He had felt kindly and grateful to her for his father's sake; but there his feelings had stopped. Whereas, with Katherine, he had been drifting, he knew not whither. The process of subjective development had been brought suddenly to its climax by his father's words. He realized that he loved Katherine.

To fly away from Geneva at this moment was particularly unpleasant—necessitating almost the rending of his heart-strings. But as he had decided, he sent a telegram to Rogers at Chamonix, secured a place in the next morning's diligence, and packed his Gladstone-bag and knapsack. He was

sincerely sorry for Felicia. No decent, honest man can learn that a girl has given him her heart in vain, without a certain amount of pain and perplexity.

"And to think that I have been such a blind idiot as never even to suspect it?" he exclaimed with a vicious jerk of the bag-strap, which burst it, and thereby occasioned a temporary diversion.

"I passed you this afternoon and you did not see me," said Felicia as they were going in to dinner. "You were in the diligence office."

"Yes," said Raine, "I was engaging a seat to Chamonix. I am going climbing with some Oxford people."

"When do you start?"

"To-morrow," said Raine. "I think I may be away some weeks."

He could not help noticing the look of disappointment in her eyes, and the little downward droop of her lips. He felt himself a brute for telling her so abruptly. However, he checked the impulse, which many men, in a similar position, have obeyed, out of mistaken kindness, to add a few consoling

words as to his return, and took advantage of the general bustle of seat-taking to leave her and go to his place at the opposite side of the table.

Many new arrivals had come to the pension during the last few days. Colonel Cazet and his wife had joined their friends the Pornichons; several desultory tourists, whose names no one knew, made their appearance at meal-times, and vanished immediately afterwards. When questioned concerning them, Mme. Boccard would reply:

"*Oh, des Americains!*" as if that explained everything.

In addition to these, Mr. Skeogh, the commercial gentleman who had surrendered to Frau Schultz's seductions, had this evening introduced a friend who was passing through Geneva. By virtue of his position as visitor of a guest, Mme. Boccard placed him at the upper end of the table between Fräulein Klinkhardt and Mme. Popea, instead of giving him a seat at the foot, by herself, where new arrivals sat, and whence, by the rules of the pension, they worked their way upwards, according to seniority.

There were twenty-one guests that night. Mme. Boccard turned a red, beaming face to them, disguising with smiles the sharp directing glances kept ever upon the summer waiter and his assistant. The air was filled with a polyglot buzz, above which could be heard the great voices of the old soldiers and the shrill accents of the Americans fresh from the discovery of Chillon. At the head of the table, however, where the older house-party were gathered, reigned a greater calm. Both Mr. Chetwynd and Felicia were silent. Raine conversed in low tones with Katherine, on America, where she had lived most of her younger life. She very rarely alluded to her once adopted nationality, preferring to be recognized as an Englishwoman, but Raine was recording his impressions of a recent visit to New York, and her comments upon his criticisms were necessary. Around them the general topic was the *fête venétienne* that was to take place on the lake. To Mr. Skeogh, who had never seen one, Frau Schultz gave hyperbolic description. Mr. Wanless, a grizzled and tanned middle-aged man, with a cordless eye-

glass and a dark straggling moustache, who had travelled apparently all over the world, rather pooh-poohed the affair as childish, and, in a lull in the talk, was heard describing a Nautch-dance to Mme. Popea.

It seemed commonplace enough, this pension dinner-party. Hundreds such were at that moment in progress all through Switzerland, differing from each other as little as the loads of any two consecutive London omnibuses on the same route. Yet to more than one person it was ever memorable.

Little Miss Bunter, who sat next to Felicia, had grown happier of late. The summer had warmed her blood. Also she had lately received an eight-page letter from Burmah which had brought her much consolation. There was a possibility, it hinted, of the marriage taking place in the spring. She had already consulted Katherine as to the trousseau, and had made cuttings from *Modern Society* of the description of fashionable weddings during the past two months. Having these hopes within her, and one of the new dresses chosen by Katherine, without, she looked much fresher

than usual this evening. Her sandy hair seemed less lifeless, her complexion less sallow. She did not speak much, being constitutionally timid. Her opinions were such weak, frail things, that she was afraid of sending them forth into the rough world. But she listened with animated interest to the various conversations. Raine's talk particularly interested her. She had a vague idea that she was improving her mind.

"It struck me," Raine was saying, "that culture in America was chiefly in the hands of the women—more so even than it is in our own strictly business circles. And nearly all New York is one great business circle."

"Were you long in the States, sir?" asked Mr. Skeogh, who had been silent for some time.

"Oh no," said Raine, looking over towards him, "only a few weeks. My remarks are from the merest superficial impressions."

"It is a fine country," said Mr. Skeogh.

Raine acquiesced politely.

"I do not like the country," said Frau Schultz, thus making the topic a fairly

general one. "There is no family life. The women are idle. They are not to my taste."

"What a blessing!" murmured Katherine in a low voice, to which Raine replied by an imperceptible smile. But aloud she said:

"I don't think American women are idle. They give their wits and not their souls to housekeeping. So they order their husbands' dinners and see to the washing of their babies just as well as other women; but they think that these are duties that any rational creature can perform without letting them absorb their whole interests in life."

"A woman's duty is to be a good housewife," said Frau Schultz dictatorially, in her harshest accent. "In Germany it is so."

"But is not the party of progress in Germany trying to improve the position of women?" asked Mr. Wanless with a securing grip of his eyeglass.

"It cannot be improved," said Frau Schultz.

"That is a matter of opinion," replied Mr. Wanless. "When elegant ladies have

Damen-lectüre especially written for them, and when peasant women are harnessed to a cart by the side of the cow, while the husband walks behind smoking his cigar—I think a little improvement is necessary somewhere."

He spoke in a clear, authoritative voice, commanding attention.

"Have you been in Germany?" asked Frau Schultz.

"I have been all over the world—travelled continuously for twenty years. Somehow the position of women has interested me. It is an index to the sociology of a country."

"Which is the most interesting one you know from that point of view?" asked old Mr. Chetwynd, who had been following the conversation.

"Burmah," replied Mr. Wanless. "It is the anomaly of the East. Germany could learn many lessons from her."

"Is the position of women very high there?" asked Miss Bunter, timidly, the mention of Burmah having stimulated her interest to the pitch of speaking.

"Oh yes!" returned Mr. Wanless, laughing. "A wife is the grey mare there with a vengeance."

A faint flush came into Miss Bunter's cheek.

"But it does not matter to the English people who live there, does it?"

Mr. Wanless assured her, amid the general smile, that English people carried their own laws and customs with them. Miss Bunter relapsed into a confused yet pleased silence. The talk continued, became detached and desultory again. Miss Bunter no longer listened, but nerved herself up to a great effort. At last, when a lull came, she moistened her lips with some wine, and leant across the table, catching the traveller's eye.

"Have you lived long in Burmah?"

"Yes. I have just come from an eighteen-months' stay there."

"I wonder if you ever met a Mr. Dotterel there?"

"I know a man of that name," said Mr. Wanless, smiling. "But Burmah is an enormous place, you know. My friend is

an F. J. Dotterel—Government appointment—stationed at Bhamo!"

"That's him," cried Miss Bunter, in suppressed and ungrammatical excitement. "How extraordinary you should know him! He is a great friend of mine."

"A very good fellow," said Mr. Wanless. "His wife and himself were very kind to me."

"I beg your pardon," said Miss Bunter. "His wife? It can't be the same—my friend is not married."

"Oh yes he is," laughed the traveller pleasantly. "There is only one F. J. Dotterel in the Government service at Bhamo. Married out there. Got three or four jolly little children."

She looked at him for a moment haggardly, and grew white to the lips. The loss of blood made her face look pinched and death-like. She tried to utter some words, but only a few inarticulate sounds came from her throat. There was a moment's intense silence, every one around her knowing what had happened. Then she swayed sideways, and Felicia caught her in her arms.

She had fainted. The table rose in confusion. Amid a hubbub of voices was heard Mme. Popea's explaining to Mr. Wanless the nature of his indiscretion.

"I will carry her to her room," said Raine, lifting her thin body in his arms. "Come and help me," he added, signing with his head to Felicia and Katherine.

They followed him out and upstairs. He laid her down on her bed.

"You know what to do, don't you?" he said to Katherine, as he left the two with the unconscious lady.

"Poor thing. It will break her heart," whispered Katherine, as she busied herself with the hooks and eyes and laces.

"I don't much believe in the fragility of women's hearts," said Felicia.

"Why do you say that, Felicia?" said Katherine gently. "You know that you don't mean it."

"Oh!" said Felicia with a little inflexion of superciliousness, "I generally say what I mean."

Katherine did not reply, reading her well enough by her own general knowledge of

human nature. We often contradict our own common sense and better impulses, for the unprofitable satisfaction of contradicting our enemy.

So when poor Miss Bunter opened her eyes and recovered consciousness, feeling sick and giddy and cold, and, seizing Felicia's hand, broke into miserable crying and sobbing, Katherine judged it wiser to leave the two of them alone together, without any further offer to share Felicia's ministrations.

When she entered the salon a little later, she found most of the party preparing to go out to see the illuminations. The little tragedy was still being discussed, and Katherine was beset by questioners. Little Miss Bunter's love story had long been common property in the pension, as she had told it to each of the ladies in the very strictest confidence.

The exodus of the guests began. Mme. Popea ran out of the room and quickly returned to Katherine's side.

"Mademoiselle Graves will not come," she said, buttoning her glove. "Could not you go and persuade her?"

"I fear I should be of no use, Mme. Popea," said Katherine. "I will ask Mr. Chetwynd."

"Ah! Then she will come," laughed Mme. Popea—and she hurried out after the Pornichons, who had asked her to accompany them.

Katherine passed by the few remaining people, chiefly ladies, standing about the room in hats and wraps, to meet Raine, who was just coming in from the balcony, where he had been smoking.

"I hear that Felicia won't go to the *fête*. Don't you think you could persuade her? It would do her good. She has been looking forward to it so much."

But Raine shook his head and looked down at her, tugging his blonde moustache. It was an embarrassing request. Katherine half divined, and forbore to press the matter. She had already somewhat sacrificed her tact to her conscience.

"But you, yourself? Are you not coming?" he asked.

"No; I think I'll stay in. I feel rather too sorry for that poor little body."

"You had better come. The brightness will cheer you."

"I don't think I should care for it," she replied, with her hand to her bosom, fingering a dark red rose in her dress.

Suddenly the flower fell from its stalk to the ground. She started slightly, from the unexpectedness, and, when Raine stooped and picked it up, held out her hand for it, palm upwards. But he disregarded her action and retained the rose.

"Do come!" he pleaded.

She glanced at him, met his eyes. A wave of emotion passed through her, seeming for the moment to lift her off her feet. Why should she refuse? She knew perfectly well that she would give her soul to go with him through fire and water to the ends of the earth. But she dreaded lest he should know it.

"Would you really like me to come?"

"You know I should."

She went to put on her things. Raine stepped on to the balcony to wait for her. He could see the pale reflection of the illuminations, and hear the noise of the people, and

the faint sound of music broken by the cracking of a cabman's whip in the street below. For a moment his surroundings seemed to him unreal, as they do to a man gliding over the edge of a precipice.

"I wonder what is going to happen?" he said to himself.

CHAPTER IX.

VARIOUS ELEMENTS HAVE THEIR SAY.

It was a sultry night. Not a breath of air was stirring. They had escaped from the crowd on the quays and were being rowed about the lake in a little boat gaily hung with Chinese lanterns. The glare fell on their faces, confusing their view, and making all dark objects around them invisible. Their eyes caught nothing but a phantasmagoria of coloured lights. The water swarmed with them. Scores of similarly illuminated craft darted hither and thither, crossed and re-crossed each other on all sides, with the dazzling effect of myriads of fireflies. All around, fixed amid the moving lights, blazed the lamps on quays, bridges and jetties. Now and then, through a momentary vista, could be seen the gas devices on the fronts of the

great hotels on the *Quai du Mont Blanc.* Now and then, too, they neared the looming hull of the great steamer, a mass of festoons of coloured lamps. The strains of the band on board broke through the roar of many voices, with a strange effect, and died away in the general hubbub as the steamer moved slowly off.

"I am glad I came," said Katherine. "It was nice of you to think of this boat. It is fresher on the water."

She was happy; he was by her side. The little canopy of lanterns above their heads seemed to draw them together, isolate them from the outer world. The lights whirled around her as in a dream. Raine too, for all his man's lesser emotional impressibility, felt a slight exaltation, a continuance of the strange sense of the unreality of things. As the moments passed, this common mood grew in intensity.

They spoke of the incident of the dinner-table, but like other things it seemed to lose perspective. Meanwhile the old wizened boatman, apparently far away in the bows,

rowed stolidly round and round within the basin formed by the quays and jetties.

"It is a mad story," said Katherine. "Almost fantastic. What object had he? Was he a fiend, or a coward, or what?"

"Both," said Raine. "With a soft sentimental heart. A fiend that is half a fool is ever the blackest of fiends. He is irresponsible for his own hell."

"Are all men like that who make life a hell for women?"

"In a way. Men are blind to the consequences of their own actions. Apply the truism specially. Or else they see only their own paths before them. Sometimes men seem 'a little brood.' I often wonder how women can love them."

"Do you? Would you include yourself?"

"Yes. I suppose so."

"Do you think you could ever be cruel to a woman?"

"I could never lie to her, if you mean that. The woman who loves me will find me straight, however much of an inferior brute I might be otherwise."

"Don't," said Katherine. "You frighten me—the suggestion—"

"But you asked me whether I could be cruel."

"A woman's thoughts and speech are never so intense as a man's. You throw a lurid light on my words and I shrink from them. Forgive me. I know that you could be nothing but what was good and true-hearted."

Raine looked at her. Her face was delicate in its strength, very pure in its sadness. The dim light by which it was visible suggested infinite things beyond that could be revealed in a greater brightness. He felt wonderfully drawn to her.

"Men have been cruel to you. That is why you ask."

"Ah no!" she said, turning away her head quickly. "I will never call men cruel. I have suffered. Who has not? The greatest suffering—it is the greatest suffering in life—that which comes between man and woman."

"It is true," replied Raine musingly. "As it can be the greatest joy. Once I could not

bear to think of it, for the pain. It is strange—"

"What is strange?" asked Katherine in a low voice.

He was scarcely conscious how he had come to strike the chord of his own life. It seemed natural at the moment.

"It is strange how like a dream it all appears now; as if another than I—a bosom friend, whose secrets I shared—had gone through it."

She put her hand lightly on his arm, and he felt the touch to his heart.

"Would you care for me to tell you? I should like to. It would seem a way of laying a ghost peacefully and reverently. It has never passed out of me yet—not even to my father."

"Tell me," murmured Katherine.

"Both are dead—twelve years ago."

"Both?"

"Yes; mother and child. I was little else than a boy—an undergraduate. She was little else than a girl—yet she had been married—then deserted by her husband and utterly alone and friendless when I met her

—in London. She was a dresser at a theatre —educated though, and refined far above her class. At first I helped her—then loved her—we couldn't marry—she offered—at first I refused. But then—well, you can end it. We loved each other dearly. If she had lived, I should have been true to her till this day—I should have married her, for she would soon have become a widow. When the child was born, I was one-and-twenty—she nineteen. We were wildly, ecstatically happy. Three months afterwards the child caught diphtheria—she caught it too from the baby—first the little one died—then the mother died in my arms. I seemed to have lived all my life before I had entered upon it. It was a heavy burthen for a lad."

"And since?" asked Katherine gently.

"I have shrunk morbidly from risking such torture a second time."

"Yours is a nature to love altogether if it loves at all."

"I reverence love too highly to treat it lightly," he said. "Tell me," he added, "do you think my punishment came upon

me rightly? There are those that would. Are you one?"

"God forbid," she replied in a low voice. "God forbid that I of all creatures should dare to judge others."

The earnestness in her tone startled him. He caught a side-view of her face. It wore the same look of sadness as on the night they had seen "Denise" together in the winter. She had suffered. A great yearning pity for her rose in his heart.

"It is well that the past can be the past," he said. "We live, and gather to ourselves fresh personalities. A little gradual change, a little daily hardening or softening, weakening or strengthening—and at the end of a few years we are different entities. Things become memories—reflections without life. That was why I said it was strange. Now all that time is only a vague memory, and it mingles with the far-off memory of my mother, who died when I was a tiny boy. And now I have put it to rest for ever—for it was a ghost until I knew you. Do you believe in idle fancies?"

"I live in a great many," said Katherine.

"I fancied—that by telling you, I should be free to give myself up to a new, strange, wonderful world that I saw ready to open for me."

"Could I ever say 'I thank you' for telling me?" replied Katherine. "I take all that you have said to my heart."

There was a long silence. He put his hand down by her side and it rested upon hers. She made a movement to withdraw it, but his touch tightened into a clasp. She allowed it to remain, surrendering herself to the happiness. Each felt the subtle communion of spirit too precious to be broken by speech. The lantern-hung boats passed backwards and forwards. One party, just as they came abreast, struck up an attempt at a jodeling song: "*Juch hol-dio hol-di-ai-do hol-di-a hol-dio.*"

The suddenness startled them. Katherine drew away her hand hastily as he looked round.

"Why did you?" he asked.

"Because—because the little dream-time came to an end."

"Why should it?"

"It is the nature of dreams."

"Why, then, should it be a dream?"

"Because it can never be a reality."

"It can. If you cared."

The words were low, scarcely audible, but they stirred the woman's soul to its depths. She remained for a moment spellbound, gazing away from him, down at the fantastically flecked water. A yearning, passionate desire shook her. One glance, one touch, one little murmured word, and she would unlock the flood-gates of a love that her whole being cried aloud for. Often she had given herself up to the tremulous joy of anticipation. Now the moment had come. It depended upon her to give a sign. But she could not. She dared not. A sign would make it all a reality in sober fact. She shrank from it now that she was brought face to face with it. With a woman's instinct she sought to temporize. But what could she say? If she cared! To deny was beyond her strength. Meanwhile the pause was growing embarrassing. She felt that his eyes were fixed upon her—that he was awaiting an answer.

"What I have said has pained you."

She turned her head to reply desperately, she scarce knew how. But the first syllable died upon her lips. A flash of lightning quivered across the space, bringing into view for a vivid, dazzling second the semi-circle of the quay, the old clustering city, the Salèves; and almost simultaneously a terrific peal of thunder broke above their heads. Katherine was not a nervous woman, but the flash and the peal were so sudden, that she instinctively gave a little cry and grasped Raine's arm. Before the rumble had died away, great drops of rain fell. In another moment it came down as from a water-spout.

The evening had been close, but they had not thought of a storm. Katherine had only a light wrap to put over her thin dress. The gay lanterns swinging above their heads and before their eyes—now they were a lightless mass of wet paper—had prevented them from noticing the gradual clouding over of the sky. They were in the middle of the basin. Amid the roar of the rain and the shouts from the boats around them, they

could hear the dull noise of the crowd on the quays scampering away to shelter.

"My poor child, you will get wet through," cried Raine, "put this round you. Let us get in as quickly as we can."

He pulled off his rough tweed coat and threw it over her shoulders; and then, before either Katherine or the old boatman were aware of his intentions, he had dispossessed the latter of his place, taken the sculls, and was pulling for shore with a vigour that the little boat had never before felt in its rowlocks.

Drenched, blinded, bewildered by the avalanche of water, Katherine felt a triumphal glow of happiness. The heavens seemed to have come to her rescue, to have given her another chance of life. She was pleased too at having his coat about her, at having heard the rough, protecting tenderness in his voice. It pleased her to feel herself borne along by his strong arms. She could just distinguish his outline in the pitch darkness, and the shimmer of his white shirt-sleeves. There was nothing

particularly heroic in his action, but it was supremely that of a man, strong, prompt, and helpful. Another flash as vivid as the first showed him a smile on her face. He shouted a cheery word as the swift darkness fell again, and rowed on vigorously, delighted at the transient vision.

In a few moments they were by the Grand Quai, amidst a confusion of boats hurriedly disgorging their loads. Experienced in many a river crush, Raine skilfully brought his boat to the landing-place, paid the old boatman, and assisted Katherine to land. It was still pouring violently. When they reached the top of the quay, Raine paused for a moment to take his bearings.

"It is ridiculous to think of a cab or shelter," he said, "We must dash home as quickly as we can. Come along."

He passed her arm through his hurriedly, and set off at a smart pace.

"Don't take off that," he cried, preventing an attempt on her part to remove the coat from her shoulders.

"But you—oh, I can't!"

"You must," he said, authoritatively.

And Katherine found it sweet to yield to his will.

They walked rapidly homewards, speaking very little, owing to the exigencies of the situation, but feeling very close to one another. Even the touch of grotesqueness in this unconventional flight through the rain made them laugh happily together, as they stumbled along in their haste.

"It is very sweet of you not to mind," he said.

She gave his arm a little pressure for reply, and laughed light-heartedly.

At the *porte-cochère* of the pension, Katherine paused before mounting the stairs, to take breath and to restore Raine his coat.

The gas-lamp by the door threw its light upon them and for the first time they saw each other clearly. They were drenched to the skin. A simultaneous exclamation rose to the lips of each.

"I earnestly hope you have taken no hurt," added Raine in a tone of concern.

"Oh no! One never takes hurt when one is happy."

The glow on her wet cheeks and the light

in her eyes confirmed the statement as far as the happiness went.

They entered at the door; he gave her his hand to help her up the stairs.

"When do you start to-morrow?"

"At seven."

"Must you go?"

"Yes. There seems to be no help for it. But I shall come back. You know that. I hate going away from you."

They stopped at the end of the little corridor where her room was situated. He detained the parting hand she gave him.

"Tell me. Were you pained at what I said—the last thing, in the boat?"

"Pained? No."

"Then you do care?"

She was silent. But she lifted her eyes to him and he read there what she could not speak. With a sudden impulse he threw his arm around her, dripping as she was, and kissed her. Then she broke away and fled to her room.

Raine's first act on reaching his room was to summon a servant and send Katherine a glass of cherry-brandy, which he poured

from a flask he had brought with him for mountaineering chances, together with a scribbled line: "Drink this, at once." Then he changed his dripping garments for comfortable flannels, and went in search of his father. But the old man, though he smiled at Raine's account of his adventure, was still depressed.

'It will be wretched without you," he said. "Yet you must go away for a time. Make it as short as you can, Raine. I shall think in the meantime of a way out of the difficulty."

"Couldn't you take Felicia somewhere?" suggested Raine. "To Lucerne. You might start a few days before my return. I must come back for a little while. Afterwards, I might join you, when you have parted from Felicia, and go back to Oxford with you."

"I will see," replied the old man a little wearily.

"Poor old dad," said Raine.

"Man is ever poor," said his father. "He will never learn the lesson of life. Even with one foot in the grave he plants the other upon the ladder of illusion."

CHAPTER X.

A TOUCH OF NATURE.

RAINE sat smoking his pipe for a long time before going to bed. The events of the day had crowded so fast upon one another, that he had scarcely had time to estimate their relative importance. His mind was not yet perfectly balanced. The first kiss of a new love disturbs fine equilibrium.

It was characteristic of him that he at once put aside all temptations to postpone his departure. He could not meet Katherine again, except as a declared lover. To parade such relations before Felicia's eyes, seemed to his simple experience in such things a cynical cruelty. Yet he devoutly hoped that fate would decide and the destinies decree that he should return as quickly as possible. There was a peculiar irritation in the

position in which he found himself. The sense of it grew in intensity as things assumed juster proportions. After all, what had been said? He was going away with everything unasked, everything unspoken. A question, a glance, a kiss; sufficient for the glowing moment—but painfully inadequate for after-hours of longing. With almost grotesque irritation he broke into an exclamation of anger against the storm that had interrupted the outburst of his gathering passion. But for a saving sense of humour he would have felt humiliated by the remembrance of the sudden check. He could not help chafing under the feeling of incompleteness.

Unlike the woman, who had taken the kiss to her heart of hearts and nursed it there wilfully forgetful, for the first delicious after-hours, of aught else in the wide world, Raine gnawed his spirit with impatient regret that circumstances had granted him no more. If the fulness of revelation were to come on the morrow, it would have been different; but he was going away—without seeing her—for days and days—leaving her with this un-

satisfying expression of his love. For he loved her, deeply, truly, with the strength of his simple, manly nature. She had roused in him every instinct of pitying protection, her delicate grace had captivated his senses, her wide experience of life, sad in its wisdom, had harmonized subtly with his robust masculine faith. Without being intellectual, she had the fine judgments of a cultured, thoughtful woman. On deep questions of ethics they met on common ground; could view the world together, and be stirred by the same sympathies. Her companionship had grown intensely dear to him. The sadness that seemed to overspread her life had appealed to his chivalry, compelled him irresistibly to her side. The sweet womanliness of her nature had been gradually revealed to him by a thousand little acts, each one weaving its charm about him. Jean-Marie, too, and his wife had drawn him within the area of their worship.

Hitherto her sadness had been attributed in his mind to no definite cause. She was a widow, had passed through much suffering, was intensely lonely, uncared for. For him

that had been enough. He had scarcely thought of speculating further. But to-night the remembrance of agitated tones in her voice forced him to a surmise. He pondered over her self-accusing cry when he had submitted to her judgment the ethical side of the poor tragedy of his early manhood.

"God forbid that I of all creatures should dare to judge others."

Women do not utter such words lightly, least of all women like Katherine. He fitted them as a key-stone into the grey, vague arch of the past. His face grew stern and thoughtful as he lay back in his seat, and passed his hand heavily through his hair, contemplating the apparition. For a time it loomed as a shadow between himself and her. And then—was it the ghost that he had laid that evening, come back as the eternal spirit of love, or was it merely his strong human faith? A light seemed to pour down from above, and Katherine emerged serene and radiant from the mist, which spread behind her thin and formless.

He sprang to his feet, rubbed his eyes and

laughed to himself. His love for her thrilled buoyantly through him. He loved her for what she had shown herself to be; a woman fair and brave and womanly—and one who loved him; that he had seen in her eyes as he had kissed her.

At half-past six on the following morning, the porter came to convey his luggage to the diligence, which starts from the Grand Quai, and a little later he himself left the house. He did so very wistfully. His quixotic flight caused him a greater pang even than he had anticipated. In the street he could not forbear giving a regretful glance upwards at the pension. To his delight, Katherine was standing on the little balcony outside her window.

The bright morning sunlight fell upon her. She was wearing a cream-coloured wrapper; a pale blue scarf about her head half covered her fair hair. Seen through the clear, pure atmosphere, she looked the incarnation of the morning. Her face flushed red all over, as she met the gladness in his eyes. She had risen early, unable to sleep; had dressed herself with elaborate care, searching ear-

nestly in her glass for the accusing lines of her thirty years. She would send a note, she had thought, by the waiter who would bring up his coffee, saying that she was astir and could see him in the salon before he started. But she had only got as far as biting the end of a pencil before a blank sheet of paper. All her preparations and fluttering of heart had ended in her going on to the balcony, to see him walk twenty yards before he turned the corner of the street. And there she had wished tremulously against her will that he would look up as he crossed the road. He had done so, was standing below her. She blushed like a young girl. But he only stood for a moment. With an eager sign he motioned her inwards, and ran back to the house.

They met outside the salon door. He rushed up to her, a little breathless from his race up the stairs, and drew her with him into the room.

"You—up at this hour—just to see me start!—are you an angel?"

He was rapturously incoherent. Her act seemed to him to be truly angelic. In the early

stages of love a man rarely takes the woman's passionate cravings into account. Acts that proceed from desires as self-centred as his own he puts down to pure, selfless graciousness towards him. And perhaps as a general principle this is just as well. The woman loves the tribute; and one of her fairest virtues is none the less fair through being won under false pretences.

Katherine looked up at him with strange shyness. He had the power of evoking that which was sweetest and most womanly in her.

"You see that I do care—greatly."

His arms were about her before the sound-wave had passed his ear. A flood of burning words burst impatiently from his lips. She leant back her head, in the joy of surrender.

"I have loved you from the first—since last Christmas. You came to me as nothing else has ever come to me—brave and strong above all men."

The words fell from her in a murmur strung to passion-pitch. One such radiant moment eclipsed the waste of grey years. She would have sold her soul for it.

She disengaged herself gently.

"I must not make you late."

"You will write to me?"

"If you write."

"Every hour, beloved, till I come back."

"Oh, let it be soon."

"How great is your trust in me. Another than you might have reproached me for going—at such a time."

She looked at him, her eyes and lips one smile.

"I can guess the reason. I honour you for it. I would not keep you. But oh! it will be long till I see you again."

"And to me. I am not one of those to whom waiting is easy. But I take away all, all yourself with me."

"All."

"Good-bye—Katherine," he whispered. "You have never called me by my name. Let me hear it from you."

"Raine!"

Again their lips met. In another moment he was speeding to catch the diligence. She went on to the balcony, kissed both hands to him as he turned the corner. Then she went

slowly back up the stairs, holding by the hand-rail, and shaken with joy and fear.

When Raine arrived at Chamonix, instead of finding Rogers and his party at the Hotel Royale as he had expected, he found a telegram awaiting him.

"Accident to Bryce. Party broken up. Letter to follow."

On inquiring of the manager, Raine learned that his telegram of the day before had been forwarded on to Rogers to Courmayeur, whence the latter had written to the hotel countermanding the rooms he had ordered. And by the next post came a letter giving details of the accident. Bryce had slipped down a crevasse and injured himself, perhaps fatally. All thoughts of further climbing were abandoned. Raine was somewhat shocked at the news. He did not know Bryce, who was a Cambridge friend of the junior Dean's, but he was sincerely concerned at the tragic end of the expedition.

The point, however, that touched him practically was that he found himself stranded at Chamonix. He eagerly scanned the long table-d'hôte in the hope of dis-

covering a familiar face. But not one was visible. He was alone in that crowded resort which only exists as a rallying point for excursionists and climbers. The sole distraction the place afforded were glaciers which he derived little interest in contemplating, and peaks which he had not the remotest desire to scale. It would have been different, if he had met a cheerful party. He had bargained with himself for their society. It was part of the contract. Now that he was forced to depend on the Alps alone for companionship, he felt aggrieved, and began to dislike them cordially. The notion, however, of going on solitary mountaineering excursions entirely against his will, appealed to his sense of humour.

"The relations between us are simply ridiculous," he said, apostrophizing the mighty snow-clad pile.

But as there was no help for it, he prepared, like Mahomet, to go the mountain cheerfully. So he secured a guide to the Tête Noire for the following day.

That done, he gave himself up entirely to

the new sweetness that had come into his life.

The few moments of the morning's meeting had lit up the day. Much still remained unspoken, but there was no longer the irritating sense of incompleteness that had filled him the night before. Yet all the deeper, subtler pulsations of his love craved immediate expression. He sat in his hotel bedroom far into the night, writing her his first letter.

For the next few days he occupied himself strenuously with the sights of Chamonix. He joined a party over the Mer de Glace, took one day over the Grands Mulets, ascended the Aiguille Verte, and then rested with a feeling of well-earned repose. His great event of the day was the Geneva post. He had received two letters from Katherine. One she had written a few hours after his departure—he put it to his lips. The second, for which he waited with a lover's impatience, was in answer to the first he had written. At first he read it with a slight shade of disappointment. It seemed to lack the spontaneity of the other. But Raine, by



"You—up at this hour—just to see me start! Are you an angel?"

nature chivalrous towards women, and holding them as creatures with emotions more delicately balanced than men and subject to a thousand undreamed-of shynesses, quickly assigned to such causes the restraint he had noticed, and, reading in, as it were a touch of passion into every touch of tenderness, satisfied the longings of his heart. There were letters too from his father. The first stated that he had mooted the plan to Felicia of the little jaunt to Lucerne, and that she had acceded to it joyfully, but in the second the old man complained of sudden poorliness. From the third Raine learned that he was in bed with a bad cold, and that Lucerne had been postponed indefinitely.

The news depressed him slightly. No letter from Katherine had accompanied it, to cheer him. On the evening of his day of rest, therefore, he was less in love with Chamonix than ever. By way of compensation the weather was bright and clear, and the sunny seat under the firs in the hotel gardens, whither he had retired with his travelling edition of "Tristram Shandy," was warm and reposeful. He was speculating over the

Rabelaisian humour of Mr. Shandy's domestic concerns, and enjoying the incongruity between it and the towering masses of rock and glacier and snow on the other side of the valley, when a man sauntered up the gravelled path, stopped before him, and asked for a light.

Raine looked up, and recognizing the newcomer as one with whom he had exchanged casual remarks during the last few days, readily complied with his request.

He was a thin, wiry man of about seven and thirty, with a clean-shaven face which bore a curious expression of mingled simplicity and shrewdness. His thin lips seemed to smile at the deception practised by his guileless pale-blue eyes. Unlike Raine, who wore the Englishman's Norfolk jacket, knickerbockers and heavy heather-mixture stockings, he was attired in grey summer trousers and a black jacket. A soft felt hat of the Tyrolese shape, a pair of field-glasses slung over his shoulder, a great gold solitaire fastening his shirt-cuff, which showed conspicuously as he lit his cigar, suggested the nationality that was confirmed by his speech.

He was an American, his name was Hockmaster, and he was visiting Europe for the first time. With these facts he had already acquainted Raine on a previous occasion.

When the American had returned the match-box, he sat down on the bench by Raine's side.

"If you want to be alone, you've only got to tell me and I'll evaporate," he said cheerfully. "But I've been getting somewhat lonesome in this valley. Nature's a capital thing in mixed society, but when you have got her all to yourself, she is a thundering dull companion."

The remark so exactly echoed Raine's sentiments of the past few days that he burst out laughing, closed "Tristram Shandy," and prepared to gossip sympathetically with his new acquaintance.

"You are not ecstatic over all this," he said with a wave of his hand.

"Only within reasonable limits," replied the American. "It's very pretty, and when you see it for the first time it fetches you in the pit of your stomach. Some folks say it touches the soul, but I don't take much stock

of souls anyway. Well, then you get over it, like sea-sickness, and it doesn't fetch you any more. But I'm glad I've seen it. That is what I came over for."

"To see the Alps?"

"Well, no. Not exactly. But to sample Europe generally. To get a bird's-eye view of all the salient features. It is very interesting. America is a fine country, but it's not the microcosm of the universe."

"But you have scenery much more grandiose than this, in the Californian Sierras," said Raine.

"We may. I don't know. And I hope I shall never know, for mountains and glaciers are not my strong point. But if they were fifty times as sublime, American mountains could not have the glamour and sentiment that brings thousands of my countrymen to gape at Mount Blanc. Other mountains may do business on a larger scale, but the Alps is an old-established firm. They have the connection, and people stick to them. Mount Blanc, too, is a sort of Westminister Abbey to Americans, and the Rigi a Stratford-on-Avon. They like to feel they have

a share in it. I don't say these are my views personally. I am afraid I take my glamour neat and get it over quickly."

As Raine had nothing particular to reply to this philosophy, and as he saw that Mr. Hockmaster would be more entertaining as a talker than as a listener, he uttered a polite commonplace by way of antistrophe, and the American again took up his parable. He spoke well and fluently. Behind the ingenuousness of his remarks there generally lurked a touch of incisiveness, which stimulated his listener's interest. His manners were those of a gentleman. Raine began to like him.

"What part of England do you come from?" he asked at length.

"Oxford."

"The University?"

"Yes."

"I haven't been there yet. I've been through Cambridge. But Oxford I am keeping until I get back. Your English institutions interest me more than anything in Europe. It's a cumbrous old bit of machinery, and won't stand comparison with

ours; but we seem to live for the sake of our institutions, whereas you let yours rip and make use of them when they serve your purpose."

He lit another cigar from the stump of the old one, and continued,—

"I come from Chicago. It is a go-ahead place, and, if it were near the sea, could become the capital of the world, when Universal Federation sets in. I love it, as perhaps you love Oxford. You have literature—"*literæ humaniores*" you call it at Oxford—in your blood, and I have business in mine. I am a speculator in a small way. I have just floated a company—got it shipshape before I sailed—for a patent process of making white lead. Now, I am as keen upon that white lead as if it were a woman. It has kept me awake at nights, and danced before my eyes during the day. I have dreamed of every ship flying American colours painted with my white lead. To make a pile out of it was quite secondary to the poetry of it. Now I bet you don't see any poetry at all in a patent white lead process—in making the land hum with it."

"What about the neat glamour?" asked Raine, smiling.

"Ah! There's a difference. I have got this all out of my own head. It is a bit of *me*. Whereas the Alps aren't—" He stared at them innocently—"Not a little bit."

The sound of the gong for the mid-day meal reached them, resonant through the rarefied air. They rose and walked together towards the hotel.

"I guess I'll come and sit next to you, if you have no objection," said Mr. Hockmaster.

"Do," replied Raine cordially, "I shall be delighted."

They lunched together, and in the afternoon walked to the Boissons and back, a pleasant three hours' excursion. Raine did not wish to absent himself from the hotel for a longer time, being anxious concerning posts. But no letters came for him, save a couple of business communications from Oxford. He was troubled about his father's health, and longing for a line from Katherine. He began to reflect that perhaps, after all, he had come on a fool's errand to

Chamonix. Poor little Felicia would have to be disillusioned sooner or later. If the Lucerne plan had fallen through, owing to his father's illness, there was no chance of sparing her the ultimate revelation of the love between himself and Katherine. He could not remain at Chamonix indefinitely; to take up other quarters at Geneva would only set the whole pension speculating; and Raine knew full well that the speculation of a whole pension is perilous to the most Calphurnian reputation.

He decided, however, to be guided by the next day's letters.

CHAPTER XI.

"THE WOMAN WHO DELIBERATES."

"THOU shalt love thy neighbour as thyself," is an excellent maxim. Its only fault is its capacity of a too wide extension. If a saving clause had been added with reference to its non-application to one's neighbour's business, it would have been perfect. But, perhaps, after all, in its faultiness lies its excellence, for counsels of perfection are of no great use to mankind, which, in its ethical systems, loves disguised loopholes for original sin.

However little the inmates of the Pension Boccard may have observed the maxim itself, they obeyed its extension to a nicety. Not only because they were women. Sometimes communities of men have been known to gossip about each other's affairs. It is

but human to speculate upon events around us, and speculation, anticipating Raine's fear, was rife at the Pension Boccard.

In the first place, the dramatic ending of poor Miss Bunter's romance kept wits and tongues exercised for days. And secondly, certain facts had become common property which pointed to interesting relations between Mrs. Stapleton and Raine Chetwynd. The chief of these facts was the early morning interview. The summer waiter reported it to the cook, who informed Madame Boccard, who mentioned it in confidence to Madame Popea, who in her satirical way described it to Fräulein Klinkhardt. From the latter it passed to Frau Schultz, who barbed it carefully in accordance with her own spite against Katherine, and sent it round on its travels again. In this form it reached Felicia.

The girl found herself just in the humour of bitterness to accept it. After the heartless, systematic deception that had been practised on Miss Bunter for fifteen years, it seemed possible to credit humanity with anything. Not that she felt any resentment against

Raine Chetwynd on her own score. She was bound to confess to herself, with tears of self-scorn, that he had never treated her with anything but the most brotherly frankness and courtesy. But in her dislike of Katherine, she certainly credited him with a commonplace amour, and thereby set him down lower in her estimation. Then her pride came, speciously to her rescue, but really, after the way of pride in women's hearts, to embitter the struggle that was taking place within her. One bright, pure feeling, however, rose above the turmoil—an intense pity for the poor frail creature out of whom had been crushed the hope of life. To have stood by as witness and comforter during that agony of despair had been one of those lurid experiences that set in motion the springs of infinitely reaching sympathies.

When old Mr. Chetwynd proposed the trip to Lucerne she sprang at it eagerly. It would be a relief to leave the pension and its associations. For the whole of the day she busied herself feverishly with preparations. It was a keen disappointment when

the old man fell ill and the trip had to be indefinitely postponed. She longed passionately for October, when she was to join her uncle and aunt in Bermuda. Meanwhile she copied out manuscript assiduously, nursed the old man as far as he would allow her, and devoted the rest of her time to whatever gaieties were afoot in the pension.

Katherine lived in a fool's paradise after Raine had gone, for a couple of days. His kiss was on her lips, the pressure of his arms lingered round her, the vibrating words rang in her ear. If unbidden thoughts came, she put them aside with a passionately rebellious will. The long morning passed like a dream. The day and evening in an intoxicated sense of happiness. In the night she slept and waked, alternately, heedless of the hours. She had won his love. It had been given to her in full, overflowing measure. It flooded her presence with sunlight. She surrendered herself to the delicious joy that it was to feel, instead of to think.

On the evening of the second day, however, came Raine's letter. She sat by her window, reading it with a beating heart. At times

the words swam before her. Until then she had not realized the wholeness, the simple nobility of his love. To her it was more than a love-letter. It was the revelation of a strong, high soul that was given her, to companion and illuminate the rest of her days upon earth. She, who in her self-abasement before him, felt unworthy to kiss the hem of his raiment, saw herself revered, worshipped, filling a holy of holies in his heart. She was to be his wife.

She read the letter through twice. Then a great fear chilled her. Its premonitions had come that evening on the lake, just before the thunder broke, and through all her after-intoxication it had loomed threateningly. Only her will had staved it off. Now it held her in its grip.

His wife. The words stared her in the face, repeated over and over again with every surrounding of passion, tenderness, and devotion. She grew cold. A lump rose in her throat. She walked across the room, poured herself out a glass of water, and sat down again. The dream, the illusion, the joy, all was over. A great pain was in her

eyes as she gazed sightlessly straight in front of her.

As she gazed, a temptation crept insidiously into her heart, relaxed and soothed for a moment her tense nerves. Why should she tell him that which she knew his fine nature would never ask? All her future to all eternity was his. What mattered the past?

Her eyes fell upon his letter on her lap, caught a few chance phrases. Then a shudder passed through her like a wave of self-contempt and revulsion, and, leaning forward, she buried her face in her hands and cried.

He was too noble to be deceived—to be entrapped as by a common adventuress. The thought scorched her. Silence would be metal too base to repay the pure gold of his love. A million times sooner speak and lose him than keep him with a lie. All that was pure and true and womanly in her revolted at the temptation.

For a long time she remained with bowed head, her thoughts whirling round the means whereby she was to deal the death-blow at

her happiness. The moments passed quickly, and the shadows gathered as the afternoon began to melt into evening. A message from Mme. Boccard, asking her whether she was coming down to dinner, was the first thing that made her conscious of the flight of time. She sent down word that she was poorly. A plate of soup brought up to her would be all that she required. Then she fell back into her despairing thoughts. The cry wrung from the soul of *Denise* hummed in her ears until it became a meaningless burthen. Since that night in January when she had seen the play with Raine, she had morbidly applied that cry to herself,—

"*Je suis de celles qu'on aime, mais qu'on n'epouse pas.*"

A faint ray of hope shot across the darkness. He had told her his own story. To him it was a sacred memory. The girl that he had loved, the mother of his child, was in his eyes the purest of women. Would not that mitigate the judgment he would have to pass on her? She clung to the hope revealed, as she lost grip of herself. He would not despise her. He would still love her. She

would be to him what that other had been. Her thoughts for a while grew hysterical.

The effort she was forced to make when the servant entered with her meal, and the physical strength given her by the warm soup, restored calm and order in her mind. She read Raine's letter through once more. It inspired her with sad, despairing courage. She became for the time the Katherine she had been so long, hopeless, resigned, fatalistic. Before she crept broken and exhausted into bed, she had written him a long calm letter telling him all. She did not spare herself, hiding behind sophistries, neither did she blacken herself like a remorseful Magdalen. She wrote it with her heart's blood, at the dictates of her highest self. Only once perhaps in a lifetime is the power given to human beings to lay thus bare their souls as they appear before the eyes of the high gods. It was a higher Katherine than she wot of, that had written that letter.

But in the morning, the human woman yearning dumbly for happiness beheld it, addressed, stamped, ready for post, and her heart was ice within her. She stood for a

moment holding it in her hand, irresolute whether to break the seal and read it over again. Perhaps, she weakly thought, something in it might be better expressed. Her finger mechanically sought the flap corner of the envelope, and she tore it slowly. Then she went back to bed with the letter. Nothing could be altered. She would re-address it and despatch it that day.

Whilst dressing she paused at her reflection in the glass, with a feminine catch at the heart. She looked pale, old, faded, she thought; faint lines were around the corners of her eyes; her features seemed pinched. She shivered slightly—hurried foolishly over her hair, so that she could be spared the sight of her face as soon as possible.

"After all," she said to herself, bitterly, "what does it matter? When that letter has gone, who in the world will care whether you look old or young?"

Life seemed to end for her from the moment the letter would fall from her hands into the letter-box. She kept it by her all day, unable to cut herself adrift. The small extra effort required to address a fresh envelope just

raised the task above her strength. Once during the day she flung herself on the bed in a fit of sobbing. She could not send it. It would spoil his trip. She would wait till he returned, till she had seen his eye light up once more as he looked at her, and heard, for one last time, the throb in his voice that she was never to hear again. Just one more hour of happiness. Then she would give him the letter, stay by him as he read it, as a penance for her present pusillanimity. Feeling miserably guilty, yet glad of the respite, she wrote him the second letter that he had received. The one that she was to have sent she carried about with her in her pocket, until the outside grew soiled and dogs-eared.

They were not happy days. But she moved about the pension outwardly calm and serene, to all appearances her own self. The feeling of self-reproach for her cowardice wore off. She resigned herself to her lot. One sight of his face—and then the end of all things. She knew, with the knowledge of herself given by years of solitude and self-repression, that she would not falter in her second resolution.

So centred, however, were her thoughts in the tragic side of her relations with Raine that she gave no heed to the possibility of gossip. None reached her ears. Her long sustained attitude of reserve, a superiority of personality, a certain dignity of manner and conduct, had won for her the respect, if not the love, of the pension. Even Frau Schultz, who hated her, found it impossible to utter the spiteful innuendo that trembled on her lips. But Mme. Popea, who was the chartered libertine of the pension, by reason of her good-nature and unblushing liberty of speech, summoned up courage one day to tread upon the ice.

"Mon Dieu," she said, as if by way of invoking the deity's aid in her venture, "it is getting dull again. I long to see Mr. Chetwynd back.

"He makes himself missed," replied Katherine calmly, continuing her sewing.

Mme. Popea had come into her room with the ostensible purpose of borrowing a stiletto. It was one of her ways to stock her work-basket with loans.

"If the dear professor grows worse, he

will return soon, I suppose. They are like women to each other, those two—good ones, in the *vie de famille* of novels. I hear the professor is much worse to-day."

"Who told you?"

"Miss Graves. She is nursing him. What a charming girl! Her devotion to him is touching. It would be quite a romance if she married Monsieur Raine. He is so handsome."

Katherine regarded the plump, irresponsible lady with placid gravity.

"You seem to take a romantic interest in them, Madame Popea."

"Mon Dieu, yes. Anything that concerns love is interesting, especially the idyllic. But you, Madame, would you be surprised if on his return they were betrothed?"

"*Il ne faut jamais s'étonner de rien*," quoted Katherine, smiling imperturbably.

"I once thought he had a *tendresse* for Madame," ventured Mme. Popea archly.

"Oh, Madame Popea," laughed Katherine. "You know what men are—and we women ought never to tell each other our impressions. If I told you the flattering remarks I

have heard about you this last fortnight, your head would be turned."

"Ah, who has spoken of me?"

Katherine rose, took out a bonnet from a drawer and somewhat ostentatiously unrolled a veil, while she returned a laughing answer.

"I am too old not to have learned discretion. It is my one vice."

And Mme. Popea, seeing that Katherine was not to be surprised into any admission, lingered a moment idly, and then took her departure. Katherine, who read through Mme. Popea, smiled to herself somewhat sadly. But her visitor's announcement regarding the old professor gave her subject for reflection. If his father grew worse, Raine would have to return at once. For a moment she half wished he would delay his coming. Her heart throbbed painfully in anticipation of what lay before her.

The announcement was true. The old man had taken a severe chill. The doctor had just spoken rather alarmingly to Felicia. She determined that Raine should be summoned.

"You must let me send a telegram to Chamonix," she said, standing by the bedside, while the old man drank his tisane. "It would cheer you to see him, wouldn't it?"

The old man shook his head.

"Not yet."

"Why?"

"It would be such a pity. He is enjoying himself."

"I should think he would not be sorry to come back," said Felicia.

An unwonted sub-acidity in her tone surprised him. He paused, with the cup at his lips, his eyes luminous. Her glance fell beneath his, and she coloured.

"I don't think he went away to enjoy himself," she said, giving expression to vague conjectures that had been taking shape in her mind the last few days. "Besides, his friends have left him in the lurch—not their fault—unhappily—but still he is alone. He would be glad to come back if you sent for him."

The old man was perplexed. He was also weakened by his attack of cold.

"Do you think that I sent him away, Felicia?" he asked.

Felicia was feminine enough to perceive his admission. She was sure of her guess now. Katherine was at the bottom of the matter. The proceedings, however, struck her as particularly futile. As they were, actually, on the real grounds. She took the empty cup from his hands, smoothed his pillow deftly, and as he laid his head back, she bent over him and whispered,—

"He went away to please you—and he will return to please you. Let me telegraph to him."

"But you—my dear child—how could you bear—?"

"I?" asked Felicia in surprise. "What have I to do with it?"

"Oh, Mr. Chetwynd!" she added after a moment's silence. "You must not remember any foolish things I told you once—I think I must have been a child then. I am ashamed of them now. I have grown older" —she struggled bravely—"and I have got over those silly feelings. I would not wish to be anything more than friends—ever—so it would make no difference to me, if he were here—except as a friend."

The old man reached out his thin hand, took hers, and laid it against his cheek.

"Then there was no need at all of his going away, since you knew?"

Felicia gave a little involuntary cry, and twitched her hand, as the revelation burst upon her. The blood flooded her cheeks and sang in her ears. The former shame was nothing to this new one.

"He went away because he saw that I cared for him?" she asked chokingly.

"My poor little darling," said the old man tenderly, "we did it all for the best."

She stood by him in silence for a long time, while he petted her hand. At last she gathered strength.

"Tell him," she said, "that it was all a mistake—that he acted nobly and generously and delicately—but that I smiled when I heard it. Tell him that I smiled, won't you, dear professor? See, I am smiling—quite gaily, like the Felicia you spoil. And now"—she withdrew her hand gently—"I am going to telegraph to him. He and I together will soon bring you round again—but I alone am not sufficient."

She administered a few feminine touches to the things on the table beside him, and went upon her self-imposed errand.

"I should like you to return as quickly as possible.

"CHETWYND."

She composed the wording of the telegram on her way to the office. It kept her from thinking of other things.

"There," she said to herself as she wrote. "That will not alarm him."

Meanwhile the invalid was sorely puzzled.

"I have made a mess of it from beginning to end," he murmured wearily. "And yet I don't think it can be dotage yet awhile. Let me reason it all out."

His eyes closed. He had put the argument into a syllogism in *Barbara*, when his brain refused to act, and he fell asleep.

CHAPTER XII.

ELECTRICITY IN THE AIR.

The waiter who brought Felicia's telegram into the smoking-room found Raine walking up and down, pipe in mouth, in a state of caged irritation. A fine, penetrating rain was falling outside, the wet dribbled down the windows, the air was impregnated with mist, and great rolls of fog hid the mountains. The guides had prophesied a clearing up of the weather at midday, but it was half-past eleven, and the prospect was growing drearier every minute. Hockmaster was yawning over a cigar and a battered copy of the *Louisville Guardian* which some compatriot had bequeathed to the hotel.

Raine seized the telegram eagerly, read it,

crumpled it into his pocket in some excitement, and turned to the waiter.

"There is a diligence to Cluses—when does it start?"

"At 12.15, Monsieur."

"And the train to Geneva?"

"At 5.50."

"Good. Secure me a seat in the diligence, and have my bill made out."

The waiter bowed and departed.

"I am sorry to break our engagement to-day, Hockmaster," said Raine to the American, who had been watching the effect of the telegram with some curiosity, "but I must start for Geneva at once."

"I like that," replied Hockmaster; "it's slick. Nothing like making up your mind in a minute. It's the way to do business. I guess I'll come too."

"You'll have a disgusting drive," said Raine, viewing the proposal with less than his usual cordiality.

"That's so," retorted the other imperturbably, "I wasn't expecting the sun to shine just because I choose to travel. I am a modest man."

"Well, hurry up," said Raine, seeing that the American was decided. "Perhaps you're wise in getting out of this."

"I should have done so a couple of days ago, if it had not been for you. You seem to have a sort of way of pushing the lonesomeness off people's shoulders."

There was an ingenuous frankness, an artless simplicity in the man's tone, that touched a soft spot in Raine's nature.

"That's devilish good of you," he replied, with an Englishman's awkwardness of acknowledgment. "You have done me a good turn too. Come along."

In spite of Hockmaster's special efforts towards entertainment, the drive to Cluses was particularly dreary. The rain never ceased falling, the damp hung thick upon leaves and branches, and clustered like wool among the pine stems. The mountains loomed vague and indistinct, fading away into mist in the middle-distance. The Arve, as the road approached it, seethed below, a muddy torrent. The desolate district beyond St. Martin heaved like an Aceldama of mud and detritus oozing through the fog.

Besides external depression, certain anxieties lay on Raine's mind. His father's health was never very strong. A dangerous illness was to be dreaded. His deep affection for his father magnified his fears. There was Katherine, too. His heart yearned towards her. He closed his eyes to the hopeless landscape, and evoked her picture as she stood in pale saffron and sapphire and a dash of pale gold, the morning's colours, in the morning sunlight. But why had she left him so long without news of her? A lover's question, which he sought to answer lover-wise.

Cluses at last, the little watchmakers' town; an hour's wait for the train. They went into a *café* and sat down. After a while Hockmaster rose, went up to an old plate-glass mirror on one side of the room, smoothed his thin sandy hair with his fingers, arranged his cravat, and then returned. With the exception of two elderly townsmen playing at dominoes in the corner, while the host sat looking on in his shirt-sleeves, they were the only customers. They conversed in desultory fashion on the

rain, the journey, the forlorn aspect of the place.

"If we had a town with an industry like this one in America," said Hockmaster, after his second *petit verre* from the carafe in front of him, "we should hitch it on to Wall Street and make a go-ahead city of it in a fortnight, and manufacture timepieces for half the universe."

"That would be rather rough on the universe," said Raine idly. "American watches—"

"The very tip-topest articles in the world!" interrupted Hockmaster warmly. "Just look at this!"

He drew from his pocket a magnificent gold watch, opened all its cases rapidly, and displayed the works before Raine's eyes.

"There! See whether that can be beaten in Europe. Made, every bit of it, in Chicago. That watch cost me 450 dollars. It did that."

Raine admired the watch, mollified the owner, who drank another glass of *fine champagne* on the strength of his country's reputation. Then with an inconsequence

that was one of the quaint features of his conversation:

"Mr. Chetwynd," he said, lighting a fresh cigar, "I am about tired to death of these gilded saloons in continental hotels. Imitation palaces are not in my line. I should like something homier. I was thinking, if you could recommend me a snug sort of boarding-house in Geneva, it would be very good of you."

"Why not come to the one I am staying at?" said Raine good-naturedly. "There is a very companionable set of people there."

"Right," replied Hockmaster. "That's real kind of you. When you come to Chicago, you track straight for Joseph K. Hockmaster. You'll find gratitude."

"My dear fellow!" laughed Raine deprecatingly.

"No," said the other in his serious way. "I repeat, it's real kind. Most of your countrymen would have shunted me off to another establishment. I think I tire folks by talking. I am always afraid. That's why I tell you to mention when you grow weary of conversation. It won't offend me. It's as natural

for me to talk as it is for a slug to leave his slime behind him. I think I'm chock full of small ideas and they overflow in a liquid kind of way. Now big ideas are solider and roll out more slowly—like yours."

And he poured himself out the last glass of *fine champagne* that remained in the decanter.

They reached the pension at half-past seven. Mme. Boccard appeared at Raine's summons, wreathed in smiles, welcomed Hockmaster graciously and assigned him a room. Dinner had just begun, she had put it back half an hour, in compliment to Mr. Chetwynd. It was charming of him to have sent her a private telegram. Everyone was well; the professor had taken a turn for the better during the day.

Raine went straight up to his father, and, to his intense relief, found his fears of a dangerous illness to be almost groundless.

"And Felicia?" he asked, after the first affectionate questionings.

"Well," replied the old man—"very bonny. Do you know, Raine, I think we may have

made a mistake. It has been all my fault. It would be the greatest kindness to forget—and to forgive your meddling old father."

Raine laughed in his kind way, reassuring the old man.

"It was not I that sent for you," continued the latter. "It was Felicia. There was no longer any reason for you to stop away—and she insisted. Girls' hearts are mysterious books. Don't search into hers, Raine. Forget it—seek your happiness where it is truest, my son—and then it will be mine."

Raine did not press the subject. He was somewhat puzzled, but he gathered that she had spoken and that silence would be the more delicate part. He postponed further consideration of the matter; for which he may be forgiven, as the longing for Katherine was tugging at his heart-strings. Besides, he was honestly very hungry, and dinner was in progress.

After a hurried toilet he went down to the dining-room. The first sound that struck his ear, as he entered, was the pop of a champagne cork and the voice of Hockmaster, who was sitting at the lower end, with his back

to the door, next to Mme. Boccard. The waiter was in the act of filling his glass from a large bottle of champagne. The blaze of light after the darkness of the corridors dazzled Raine, and he paused for a second on the threshold, glancing up the table. He was greeted by two rows of welcoming faces turned towards him and a chorus of kind salutations. The old commandant stretched up his hand behind his chair and gave a vigorous handshake. Mme. Popea looked up at him, with a smile over her good-natured face, as he passed along. But he had eyes only for Katherine. A curious little spasm passed through him, as he met her glance. It seemed to contain a world of fears. She was looking pale and ill.

Mme. Boccard, in her high-pitched voice, directed him to take the professor's place at the head of the table. He found himself thus between Felicia and Katherine. Felicia greeted him naturally. Katherine gave him a cold, trembling hand, and an almost furtive look. Evidently something had happened during his absence, of whose nature he was ignorant. She was no longer the same

woman. Mere feminine shyness would not account for this suppressed agitation. The food on her plate had remained untouched. For a moment he lost sense of the scene round him. The universe consisted in this woman with the ashen face and quickly heaving bosom. He bent towards her,—

"Are you ill?" he whispered, his emotion expressing itself by the first chance commonplace.

"No," she returned hurriedly, in the same tone. "A sudden faintness—my heart, perhaps. Don't notice me—for heaven's sake! I shall be better soon."

Question and answer passed too quickly to attract attention. Raine recovered his balance, and turned to Felicia.

"My father seems to be getting on nicely, thanks to you," he said kindly.

"Oh, not to me. To you. Since your reply came to-day."

"I am always so nervous when he gets seedy. He is not strong. I have been full of direful imaginations all the afternoon."

Felicia sketched the history of the case,

touched on the abandoned trip to Lucerne, condoled with Raine on the disappointment at not meeting his friends at Chamonix. She talked bravely, all the pride of her young-womanhood up in arms to help her. Perhaps she could convince him that he had made a mistake. She devoted to the task all her energies. Her modesty and intuitive tact saved her from over-acting. Her concentration, however, prevented her from realizing the silent agitation of Katherine. She attributed it to embarrassment at meeting Raine after his absence, and felt a little thrill of gratified vanity at the inversion of parts. It used to be Katherine who was outwardly at perfect ease and self-contained, and herself who was embarrassed and tongue-tied. It seemed a little victory in the handling of life.

Raine spoke brightly enough of his adventures at Chamonix, including Miss Bunter, who was sitting very subdued and wan next to Felicia, in the conversation, and drew from her an account of a far-off visit to the Mer de Glace. But he was feeling low at heart. If he addressed a chance remark

to Katherine, she greeted it with a forced smile, which he felt like a stab. He could see from the very fear in her eyes that it was not merely sudden faintness. He noticed that on trying to lift her wine-glass, which he had accidentally refilled too full, her hand shook so much that she abandoned the attempt. He silently poured some wine into one that he had not used and exchanged glasses with her. She acknowledged the act with a bow of her head and drank the wine somewhat feverishly.

"My American friend seems to be enjoying himself," said Raine to Felicia, as Hock-master's somewhat sharply pitched voice was heard expounding his artlessly paradoxical philosophy of life to those around him.

Felicia leant forward, so as to catch a glimpse of him down the long table.

"You must introduce him," she said.

"With pleasure. He will amuse you. I think if Bret Harte had known him, he would not have asked whether the Caucasian was played out. He is as childlike and bland as Ah Sin himself. But he is a capital fellow."

They paused for a moment to catch what he was saying. Raine saw him leaning across the table and addressing a new arrival, evidently a compatriot.

"No. I am not a married man. But I am fond of ladies' society. To get along without ladies is like washing your hands without soap."

There was laughter at the remark, which was increased by his attempts to convey his meaning in French to Mme. Boccard.

Felicia looked at Raine and laughed too. Then out of kindly impulse, by chance catching Katherine's eye,—

"Mr. Chetwynd has brought us quite an acquisition, don't you think so?"

Katherine forced a smile and uttered a semi-articulate "yes." Then her eyelids closed for a few seconds and quivered, as in a nervous attack. This sign of agitation could not escape Felicia's notice. She became aware that something was happening. A suspicion of a tragic element in the relations between the man she loved and the woman she hated, flitted in the twilight of her mind. The laugh died from her lips, as she looked

more keenly at Katherine. She turned her glance towards Raine, saw his eyes fix themselves for a moment on Katherine with an indescribable expression of pain and longing. It was the first time she had seen for herself that he loved her. The pang of it gripped her heart. But she disregarded it. Again she remembered Frau Schultz's innuendoes and tittle-tattle, and involuntarily brought them to bear on the present situation. The impression left on her mind by the tragedy in the life of the poor little lady by her side had not yet been effaced. It aided in the suggestion of another tragedy in the lives of these two others. The strain upon herself had also somewhat exalted her system and produced a certain nervous sensitiveness. Something was happening—something fateful or tragic. A feeling akin to awe came over her young mind, and suppressed her own simpler girlish fancies. A silence fell upon her, as it had fallen upon Raine and Katherine. The constraint began to grow painful, the meal seemed endless. Hockmaster's voice in the distance began to irritate her nerves.

At last the dinner was over. There was

the usual scuffling of chairs and *frou-frou* of skirts, as the guests rose. With a common impulse Raine and Katherine moved a step aside.

"Katherine!"

She put one hand up to her bosom, and steadied herself with the other on the back of her chair.

"I am feeling very ill," she said, thickly. "Don't think me cruel—I can't see you to-night. To-morrow. I shall be better then. You have seen I am not myself—this last hour has been martyrdom—forgive me—good-night."

"Don't forget that I love you, dear—let that give you strength," said Raine, in a low voice.

A cry came involuntarly to her lips, wrung from her suffering.

"Ah, don't!"

She turned quickly, and followed the departing guests. Raine stood bewildered, looking with contracted brow at her receding form. Hockmaster was standing at the door, his dinner napkin over his arm, a few yards away from the group of men

who had remained to smoke. He opened the door a little wider for her. But she passed out like an automaton, looking neither to right nor left.

The American closed the door, and came up to Raine.

"Say, Chetwynd, can one get a liqueur brandy here?"

"The waiter will be here in a minute for orders," replied Raine. "How are you getting on?"

"First class. Liveliest meal I've had since I dined on a burning ship sailing from New York to Cuba. Did I ever tell you the story?—My hell! It was a hot time! Have a cigar."

"No, thanks," replied Raine. "I must go and fetch my pipe. When I come back you can tell me."

Deeply troubled about Katherine, he was not in the humour for Hockmaster's stories, and he seized eagerly at the excuse for being free from him for a time. He went out on to the balcony, with the intention of passing through to the drawing-room, where he expected to find Felicia. An idea had occurred

to him which he was anxious to put into execution. But after passing two or three ladies, he discovered Felicia alone in the dimness of the furthest end of the balcony.

"Felicia," he said, calling her for the first time by her Christian name, "you are a dear good girl—you will help me if you can. Has Katherine been ill during my absence?"

The direct, frank appeal touched the girl to the heart. It seemed to raise her with one great leap in her own esteem, above all the burning shame she had suffered. Raine's vigorous, sympathetic instinct had pierced through externals to the innermost of her maidenhood. She answered his question gently.

"No. She has been quite as usual all the time. But I think she has looked sadder these last few days."

"She has not been looking ill—as at dinner to-night?"

"No. That was sudden."

And then with a strange, absolutely new, almost delicious sense of the strong man

weakly depending upon her for comfort, she said timidly,—

"You mustn't be unhappy. She may have been longing for you to come back—for she loves you—and this evening—she is very delicate, you know. Sometimes when I am with her, she seems so fragile—she will be better to-morrow—and you will be happy."

"Ah! Thank you, Felicia," said Raine, greatly moved. "I wish—I wish you would let me kiss you for it."

"Yes," she whispered.

He stooped, and touched her cheek with his lips, and then strode away feeling somehow stronger and serener.

And Felicia remained on the balcony deep in thought, her girlish, love purified by the the brotherly kiss.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE SOILING OF A PAGE.

It was the large room in the Kursaal assigned to the *Cercle de Genève.* Of the two long green tables, one was deserted and in darkness, and the other, brilliantly lighted from overhanging green shades, was surrounded by a fair number of men. Except at short intervals between the hands, a decorous silence prevailed, broken only by the stereotyped phrases, *une carte, sept, neuf, baccara,* marking the progress of the game. But when the hand was over, voices rose, and above them was heard the sharp click of the mother-of-pearl counters and the chink of gold and silver, as the croupier, in the middle of the table, opposite the banker, settled losses and gains. Then the croupier,—

"*Quarante louis dans la banque, vingt à*

chaque tableau. Faites vos jeux, messieurs. A cheval? Bien, monsieur. Rien ne va plus!"

And then silence again while the hand was being played.

The company was cosmopolitan; two or three elderly Genevese citizens, a sprinkling of Germans and Russians, two or three of nondescript nationality, speaking English, French, and German with equal fluency, of the swarthy, Israelitish type familiar at Monte Carlo and Aix-les-Bains, and a few English and Americans. Among the latter were Raine and Hockmaster. The American was winning heavily. When the hand had come to him, he had "passed" seven, nine, and twelve times respectively, and a little mountain of notes, *fiches* and gold lay before him. On a small table by his side was a tumbler of brandy and water which he replenished at intervals from the customary graduated decanter and a carafe of iced water. His cheeks were flushed and his eyes unnaturally bright, and his speech, when the croupier's spoon deposited his winnings in front of him, was somewhat exuberant and excited.

Raine, who had played very little, was neither winning nor losing. He had accompanied Hockmaster, purely for the sake of distraction, intending to while away an hour or two before bedtime. The pleasant walk along the quays to and from the Kursaal had also been an inducement. But he had sat there next to Hockmaster for several hours, interested in the game and in his companion's astonishing luck. For the wholesome-minded person, with a keen sense of life and a broad sympathy with its interests, there is ever a fascination in watching the chances of a gaming table. Fortune seems to come down and give a private exhibition of her wheel. The great universe seems to stand still for a while, and only this microcosm to be subjected to its chances.

At last he grew tired, however, and suggested to Hockmaster the reasonableness of retiring. Besides, the increasing excitement of the American led him to reflect, for the first time, upon the quantity of drink that he had consumed.

"I guess I'm going to clear out all these boys," replied Hockmaster.

"In that case," said Raine, rising, "I'm going home."

The other caught him by his coat.

"Half an hour more."

"No. I have had enough. So have you."

"Just the end of this new bank, then."

The croupier was crying a new bank—putting it up to auction.

"*La banque est aux enchères. Combien la banque?*"

"I'll wait till you have had just one stake," said Raine, by way of compromise.

Bids were made for the bank. Ten louis, twenty louis, thirty.

"Fifty," cried Hockmaster, suddenly, with his elbows on the table. Raine clapped him on the shoulder.

"That's not in the bargain."

"A hundred," cried a fat German at the end of the other *tableau*, who had been losing persistently.

"You wait if you want to see fun," said Hockmaster. "Two hundred."

Murmurs began to arise. Play seldom ran so high in the *cercle*. It was too much.

"*Assez, assez,*" growled the Genevese citizens.

But the rest of the table was athrill with excitement.

"Two hundred and fifty," cried the German.

"Four hundred," said Hockmaster.

"Five!" screamed the German.

"The gentleman can have that bank," drawled Hockmaster. "And I'll go *banco*."

Which means that he would play one hand against the new banker for the whole amount of the bank—£400.

There was a death-like silence. The German, looking pallid and flabby, took his seat. The stakes were deposited on the table. The croupier placed the fresh packs on the rest before the new banker. With trembling fingers the German slipped the two cards apiece to Hockmaster and himself. The American allowed his cards to remain in front of him for a moment as he looked up at Raine, who was standing behind him, also under the spell of the general excitement.

"If I lose this, I take the next tramcar back to Chicago."

"Take up your cards," grumbled an impatient voice.

Hockmaster picked them up. They were a 6 and a 4, which making 10, according to the principles of the game where tens and multiples of ten count as nothing, were valueless.

"*Une carte?*" asked the German.

"Yes."

"The card was an ace. The beads of perspiration formed on the American's forehead. Only a miracle could save him—that of the banker drawing tens. For if the banker's pips totted up, subtracting multiples of ten, to any number between 2 and 9, Hockmaster lost. The banker displayed his cards. Two queens. The chances were now 9 to 4 in the banker's favour. He drew a card slowly from the top. It was the ten of diamonds.

"*Baccara!*" he gasped.

"One!" cried Hockmaster, throwing down his cards.

A hubbub of eager voices arose at the

sensational victory. The German retired from the table and left the room without saying a word. Hockmaster wiped his forehead and stowed away the bank-notes and gold in his pockets.

"I reckon I've had enough too," he exclaimed in a thick, unsteady voice. "Good-night, gentlemen."

He rose, stretched himself, laid hold of Raine's arm, and the two went out together. As they reached the front steps of the Kursaal, they heard the German driving away in a cab that had been waiting.

"I wish there was another one," said Hockmaster, reeling.

The fresh night air struck him like an electric shock. He lurched heavily against Raine, and laughed stupidly.

"I guess I'm as drunk as a boiled owl."

Raine was surprised, angry and disgusted. The modern Englishman sees nothing funny in drunkenness. If he had suspected that Hockmaster was drinking to the degree of intoxication, he would have left the Kursaal long before. But the motionlessness of his position and the intense excitement of the

game had combined to check temporarily the effects of the alcohol. There was no help for it, however; he must give the drunken man his arm and convey him home.

They soon emerged on to the quay. It was a superb moonlit night. The lake slumbered peacefully below, the bright expanse sweeping away from the shadows of the town, scarcely broken by a ripple. At that hour not a soul was stirring. Hockmaster's excited talk struck with sharp resonance on the lonely air. As soon as he had realized his condition of leg-helplessness, he trusted to his companion's support, and, thinking no more about it, talked volubly of the game, his winnings, his late adversary's piteous grimace, when the only losing card he could draw turned up. Then he broke out into loud laughter.

"Stop that!" cried Raine, somewhat savagely, jerking his arm.

Hockmaster ceased, looked up at him with lack-lustre eye.

"I guess I'm drunk. Let's sit down a minute. It's my legs that don't realize their responsibility."

He pitched sideways in the direction of a seat on the quay, dragging Raine a step with him. Raine, not sorry to be free of his weight for a few moments, agreed to sit down. Perhaps the rest in the fresh air would sober him a little; at least enough to enable him to accomplish unaided the remainder of his walk home. Having lit his meerschaum, Raine gave himself up philosophically to the situation. It was just as pleasant and as profitable to be sitting there under the stars, in front of the magic of the lake, as to be fretting through anxious hours in his bedroom, longing for the morrow. For a time he forgot Hockmaster, who sprawled silently by him, his incapable legs stretched out compass-wise, and his hands in his pockets. His mind hovered around Katherine, lost itself in mingling memories of doubts and hopes; wandered back to Oxford and his uncertainties, returned to Geneva, to their first talk in the Jardin Anglais, to stray moments when they had drifted into close contact, to the glow of the first kiss, and finally settled in the gloom that her agitation that evening had spread about him. Then,

with a start, he remembered the American, whose silence was alarming.

"Look here. You are not going to sleep!"

"All right, sonny. Don't you be alarmed," replied Hockmaster with drunken gravity. "I am all right sitting, anyway. I've been fixing up something in my mind, and it's like shaving on board ship in a hurricane. Say, you're my friend, aren't you? If you thought I was a darned skunk, you'd tell me."

"You have soaked too much brandy, my friend," replied Raine. "That doesn't require much 'fixing up.' Anyhow, the next time you want to go on the drink, please do it when I am not there."

"Quite right," said Hockmaster, rolling his head towards him with a portentous air. "You're disgusted at my being drunk—so'm I—But thatsh not the question. I felt sort of mean, like the chewed end of a cigar, and I tried to gargle the feeling away. But it wasn't my fault."

"Well, never mind," said Raine, with a smile. "Don't do it again."

"You bet your bottom dollar I don't. The man who puts his head twice into the Divorce Court deserves to be shot sitting."

Raine was startled. What was the man driving at?

"You see, I guess I ought to have married her afterwards," continued Hockmaster. "But those mines I told you of carried me down to Mexico. Now when a man's got a blaze at a million of dollars he can't afford to be fooling around after a woman. She can wait, but the dollars won't. That's what I was trying to fix up to tell you—as a real friend."

"Tell me to-morrow," said Raine, preparing to rise. "Let us get home now."

He had no desire to hear the tipsy details of Hockmaster's past life. But the American put detaining hands on his arm and shoulders, in familiar confidence.

"I want your opinion—I seduced her from her husband, and didn't marry her after the divorce, and when I saw her this evening for the first time after eight years—"

Raine leaped to his feet with a horrible surmise.

"What the devil are you talking about? Whom do you mean?"

"Yes," said Hockmaster, nodding in a melancholy way. "I thought I was a mean skunk. You are disgusted."

Raine seized him by the collar and shook him.

"Answer my question—which lady do you mean?"

"Oh!" said Hockmaster, "of course. You don't know. Why, the sweetest, prettiest woman there, sitting next to you. I guess she was upset at seeing me."

He went on talking. But Raine heard no more. His brain was in a whirl, a nausea was at his heart. His prized meerschaum fell from his hand, and, knocking against the seat, dropped broken on to the ground; but he was unconscious of it. Everything blazed before him in a livid light. A horrible repulsion from the inert, ignoble figure sprawling beneath him grew into a loathing anger. His fingers thrilled to seize the American again by the collar and shake the life out of him like a rat.

"You damned little cad—betraying her to

a stranger—you infernal, drunken little cad!"

Controlling his rage with a great effort, he turned, and strode away with set teeth. He heard the American's voice calling him, but he went on.

"Hallo! Chetwynd!" cried Hockmaster, rising with difficulty to his feet. "Chetwy—ynd!"

He staggered forward a couple of paces and then fell prone. After a few ineffectual efforts to get up, he abandoned the attempt, and lay quiescent.

Raine walked about fifty yards. He had heard the fall. At first it was a grim satisfaction to let him lie there—all night if need were. But then it struck him with unpleasant suddenness that Hockmaster was carrying about his person an immense sum of money in notes and gold. To leave him to the risk of being robbed and perhaps knocked on the head was impossible. He conquered his repugnance and turned back.

"Get up."

"Eh? All right. I think I'll go to shleep."

Raine lifted him to his feet, shook him to a degree of soberness, and with one arm around him, marched again homewards.

He loathed the man. To be condemned to hug him close to his person set jarring every nerve of physical repulsion. Raine did not handle him tenderly in that moonlight walk. Whilst sitting on the bench, the American had been coherent in his speech, but his fall and resignation to slumber on the pavement had relaxed the tension of his mind, and he grew maudlin and inarticulate. Now and then he remonstrated with his protector for hurrying him along so fast. In fact, Raine, in his passionate desire to shake himself free of the incubus, was unconsciously exerting his great strength almost to carry him bodily.

In the middle of the bridge, Hockmaster laughed softly to himself.

"To think I should see her again. Dear little Kitty."

A horrible wave of disgust swept through Raine. He gripped the man viciously.

"Damn you! If you mention her name again, I'll pitch you into the lake."

"That would be a pity," murmured the American in a panting murmur. "I can't swim."

Raine increased his pace, so that speech became for the American a physical impossibility. In the midst of his disgust came the memory of the last time he had come homewards across that bridge. Then, too, he had hurried blindly, anxious to reach the pension. The cynical irony of the parallel smote him. A clock struck two as they reached the corner of the street. Hockmaster was limply happy, comfortably breathless. Raine propped him against the wall as he waited for the *concierge* to open to his ring. The door was soon swung open, and Raine dragged the American up the dark staircase. When they reached the latter's bedroom, he flung him in unceremoniously and left him to himself.

Then, when he was alone, rid of the man's body, Raine pieced the story together more calmly. It was sickening. His fair pure Katherine to have given herself to that little drunken cad, to have wrecked her life for him—it was sickening.

There are times in a man's career when the poetry of life seems to be blotted out, and its whole story nothing but ignoble prose.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE WEAKER SIDE.

RAINE had judged her very gently. He had rightly guessed that she had fallen upon the thorns wherewith society strews the land outside its own beaten paths. His insight into the depths of her nature had awakened within him a strong man's yearning pity. In his eyes she was the frail tender thing that had been torn and wounded, and he had taken to his heart the joy of the knowledge that his arms would give her rest and peace at the last.

Although Hockmaster's revelation had jarred through his whole being, he judged her gently now. He was honest-souled enough to disintegrate æsthetic disgust from abiding emotion. He was keenly sensible of

the agony she had endured at dinner, and he suffered with her truly and loyally. But the ignobleness attendant on all the conditions of Hockmaster's drunken confidence spread itself for the time like a foul curtain over finer feelings. He could not help wishing that she had told him her story. That the consciousness of her position as a divorced woman had been the cause of the constraint of her letters, he could no longer doubt. That she intended to make all clear to him before she definitely pledged herself to him as his wife, he was absolutely certain. His nature was too loyal for him to suspect otherwise. There he read her truly. But why had she waited? It would have made his present course of action so much more simple, had the spoken confidence between them enabled him to take the initiative. Now his hands were tied. He could do nothing but wait until she made the sign. Thus he thought, in calmer, nobler moments. But then the common story of seduction, with its vulgar stigma of the divorce court, and the personality of the reeling, hic-

coughing man, sent a shiver through his flesh.

In the morning he spent an hour with his father, forgetting for the while his own troubles in endeavours to cheer and amuse. On his way out, he met Mme. Boccard, who greeted him with plaintive volubility. His American friend had paid his bill and left orders for his bag to be given to the porter from the Hôtel National. She was sorry her establishment had not been to his liking. What did Monsieur Chetwynd think of the dinner? What had been lacking? And the bed? It was a beautiful bed—as it happened, the best in all the pension. Raine consoled her, as best he could, for the American's defection, but in his heart he was grimly pleased at this sign of grace in his late friend. He had some idea, at least, when sober, of common decency. Mme. Boccard enquired concernedly after the professor, was delighted to hear that he was mending.

"Ah, that is good," she said, "it would not be suitable if too many people were ill. The pension would get a bad name. That

poor Mme. Stapleton is still suffering this morning. It is Mr. Chetwynd who will be sorry."

"Nothing serious?" asked Raine, in some alarm.

"Oh no—*une crise des nerfs. Que voulez-vous? Les dames sont comme cela.*"

In spite of this information, however, he looked into his room, on his way out, in the vague hope of finding a note from Katherine. But there was none. He felt himself in a cruelly false position. Yet he could do nothing. Like a wise man he resolved to await events and in the meantime to proceed with his usual habits. In accordance therefore with the latter, he walked up the Grand Quai and sat down at one of the tables outside the Café du Nord, where he had been accustomed, before his absence at Chamonix, to read the *Journal de Genève* and the previous day's *Figaro*. It was pleasant to get back to a part of the former way of life, when Hockmaster was undreamed of. The retirement of his late friend from the pension was a relief to him. He felt he could breath

more freely. If he could be assured that Hockmaster would retire from Geneva as well, and vanish into the Unknown whence he came, he would have been almost happy. He wanted never to set eyes on his face again.

But the particularly undesired invariably happens. He was trying to concentrate his mind upon the literary supplement of the *Figaro*, when the ingenuous but now detested voice fell upon his ear.

"I was just on my way to ransack the town of Geneva for you."

Raine looked up frowningly. Hockmaster was standing by his side, sprucely attired, clean-shaven, the pink of freshness. His shirt cuffs were immaculately conspicuous, he wore patent-leather boots and carried a new pair of gloves in his hand. His pale-blue eyes looked as innocent as if they had never gazed upon liquid stronger than a pellucid lake. Immediately after he had spoken he sat down and airily waved away the waiter, who was hovering near for orders.

"Did you particularly desire to see me?" asked Raine, stiffly.

"I do. Particularly. I guess I riled you considerably last night, and my mind would not be easy until I apologized. For anything I did last night and anything I said, I apologize most humbly. I know," he added with one of his child-like smiles, "that I fell by a long chalk from the image of my Maker, and I can't expect you to forgive me all at once—but if you were to do it by degrees, beginning from now, you would make me feel that I am gradually approximating to it again."

There was a quaint charm in the manner of this astonishing man, to which Raine could not help being susceptible, in spite of his dislike. Besides, the ordinary conventions of life bound him to accept an apology so amply tendered.

"You did put me to some trouble," he said gravely, "and for that I most cordially accept your excuses. For the rest—" he completed the sense with a gesture.

But Hockmaster looked pained.

"I see, Mr. Chetwynd. What you can't

do is to pal on to a man who has betrayed a woman's honour."

Raine felt embarrassed. He was aware that he had been disingenuous in shifting the whole weight of his disgust and anger on to that one particular point. The direct appeal did not lack manliness, was evidently sincere. It stirred within him the sense of justice. He tried to realize his attitude towards Hockmaster in the case of Katherine being merely a chance acquaintance. Obviously all the complex feelings centering round his love for her ought to go for nothing in his judgment of Hockmaster. Raine was an honourable man, who hated hypocrisy and prejudice and unfair dealing, and the detection of them in himself brought with it an irritating sense of shame.

"I have the privilege of the friendship of the lady in question," he replied to the American, "and therefore felt a personal resentment of your confidence last night."

"Mr. Chetwynd," returned Hockmaster, leaning forward earnestly with his elbows on the table, "there is only one way in which

I can make things square, and that is to take you into my confidence still further."

"Oh, for God's sake, man, let us drop the subject!"

"No. For I think you'll be pleased. You are a straight, honourable man, and I want to act in a straight, honourable way. Do you see that?"

"Perfectly," said Raine. "But don't you also see that this is a matter that cannot be discussed? A woman's name cannot be bandied about by two men. Come, we will let bygones be bygones."

He rose, grasping his stick, as if to depart, and held out his hand. But the American, somewhat to Raine's astonishment, made a deprecating gesture and also rose to his feet.

"No. Not yet," he said blandly. "Not before you feel sure I am doing the straight thing. You called me a cad, last night, didn't you?"

"Yes. But perhaps I was hasty."

"Oh no. I own up. Honest Injun, as we say in America. I was a cad. Only, having

called your friend a cad, you owe it to him to allow him to retrieve his character in your eyes."

"Why should you be so anxious to do so?" asked Raine, struck with the man's earnestness.

"Because I've got sort of fond of you," replied the American. "Will you listen to me for two minutes?"

"Certainly."

"Then I'll tell you that I'm going direct, this very minute, to ask that lady to marry me."

"To marry you?" cried Raine, with the blood in his cheeks. "It would be an insult!"

"It's a pity you think so," returned Hockmaster reflectively. "I wish I could unmake my mind, but you see it's all fixed up already."

"What's fixed up?"

"That I should ask her. Mr. Chetwynd, this is the first chance I have had. For eight years I have lost every trace of her. If you know a more honourable

way of repairing the wrong, you just tell me."

"Man alive! leave Geneva and never let her hear of you again."

"I will, if she refuses me. That's fixed up too. I must be going."

"Mrs. Stapleton is ill, and can't see you this morning," said Raine desperately.

"I have an appointment with her in five minutes' time," replied the other imperturbably. "Now, Mr. Chetwynd, I shall be proud to shake hands with you."

He extended his hand, which Raine, thrown off his balance for the moment, took mechanically; and then he gave him a parting nod, jerked forward his shirt-cuffs, squared his shoulders and marched away, evidently pleased with himself.

Raine sat down again by the marble table, took a mouthful of the vermouth in front of him, and tried to recover his equilibrium. Katherine was going to see this man, to listen to a proposal of marriage. A spasm of pain shot through him. Perhaps the older love had smouldered through the years

and had burst forth again. His hand shook as he put the glass to his lips again.

People came and went in the *café*, sat down to their bock or absinthe and departed. The busy life of Geneva passed by on the sunny pavement; brown-cheeked, pale-eyed Swiss peasants, blue-bloused workmen, tourists with veils and puggarees and Baedekers. Barefooted children, spying the waiter's inattention, whined forward with decrepit bunches of edelweiss. Smart flower-sellers, in starched white sleeves, displayed their great baskets to the idlers. Cabs, hired by family parties of Germans or Americans, drove off with raucous shouts and cracking of whips, from the rank in the shade opposite, by the garden railings. The manager of the *café*, in correct frock-coat, stood under the awning in the gangway, and smiled benignly on his customers. The time passed. But Raine sat there chin in hand, staring at the blue veins of the marble, his thoughts and emotions as inchoate as they.

At last he became aware that someone looked at him and bowed. Rousing himself

from his daze he recognized Felicia, who was advancing along the pavement by the outer row of chairs. With a sudden impulse, he rose, and leaving some money for the waiter, went out and greeted her.

"Isn't it a lovely day?" she said brightly. "I couldn't stay in the pension after déjeuner, so I came out to do some shopping."

"Déjeuner!" cried Raine. "Do you mean to say it is over?"

"Why, of course. Haven't you had any?"

"No—the time has passed. However, I am not very hungry. Do you mind if I go shopping with you?"

"I should feel flattered, Mr. Chetwynd."

She laughed up at him from under her red parasol. The sight of her, fresh in her youthful colouring and dainty white dress, seemed to soothe the man's somewhat weary senses. A feeling of restfulness in her company stole over his heart, as he walked by her side.

"What are you going to buy?" he asked as they passed by the shops.

"I really don't know. I must consider. Perhaps some needles and tape. But you must stay outside."

"Oh no. I will come with you and see how it is done," said Raine with a smile.

"Then I'll have to buy something important that I don't want," said Felicia.

A laughing argument, which lasted until the needles and tape were purchased. Then they continued their walk down the Rue de la Corraterie and came to the Bastion gardens, where they sat down under the trees. Felicia was happy. The brotherly kiss of the previous evening had restored to her the self-respect that her maidenhood seemed to have lost. He was still the prince of her girl's heart, she could serve him now, she felt, without shame or shrinking. The growing woman in her divined his mood and strove to cheer him with her most lightsome self.

Womanhood divined the mood, but inexperience was blind to its dangerousness. Unconsciously her sweet charm of youth drew Raine nearer to her. When they parted, he felt that he had gone within an

ace of making love to her, and committing a base action. The thought stung him. He had not reckoned upon such weakness in himself. Spurred by an impatient scorn of his cowardice, his heart turned all the more passionately to Katherine.

CHAPTER XV.

THE SIGNING OF A DEATH WARRANT.

The balcony outside Katherine's room baked in the morning sun. A tiny patch of sunshine stood on the threshold of the open window like a hesitating guest. A cool breeze entered the room, fluttering the gay ribbons of a tambourine hanging against the wall.

Hockmaster had gone. She did not know whether it was the relief of his absence or the rush of air caused by the opening of the door that sent a fierce momentary thrill through her frame. Her eyes were burning, her throat parched, her body quivering in a passion of anger. She stood for a few seconds, with parted lips, breathing great draughts of the cool air, and mechanically unloosened the neck of her dress; it was strangling her. Then she turned, looking

from right to left, like a caged creature panting for escape. Her glance fell upon the chair where Hockmaster had just sat. The edge of the rug at the feet was curled, the cushion flattened, the tidy disarranged—all hatefully suggestive of his continued presence. With a passionate movement, she rushed and restored the things to order, shaking the cushion with childish fierceness, till not a wrinkle was left. While the action lasted, it relieved her.

She crossed the room, sat for a moment. But every pulse in her throbbed. Motionlessness was impossible. She sprang to her feet and paced the room, moving her arms in passionate gestures.

Forgive him! Never—never in this world or the next. To have betrayed her—to Raine of all men. The thought in its fiery agony was almost unthinkable. The drawling, plaintive tone in which he had made his confession maddened her. The echo of his words pierced her brain.

The sudden meeting the night before had shaken her. After the ordeal of the dinner

her nerves had given way, and she had lain awake all night with throbbing temples. She had risen, faint and ill, to read his note beseeching an interview. She had strung herself to go through with it. As the hours passed she had grown more self-possessed; while waiting, had put some extra tidying touches to her room, rearranged some flowers she had bought the day before. She had even smiled to herself. After all, what claim had this man upon her?

He had come, trim, point-device in his attire, looking scarcely a day older than when she had forsaken all for him. He had pleaded, owned himself a scoundrel, strengthening his cause by his very weakness.

"I was going to marry you, Kitty. Before God I was! On my return from Mexico. I thought I was going to make millions—become one of the little gods of the earth. No man living would have let go the chance. I guess I was to have made you more powerful than the ordinary run of queens. Who could have told those mines were a fraud? Van Hoetmann himself was deceived. I came back at once. You were

gone. I tried to trace you. I lost you. And all these years I have been kind of haunted by it. Before I left Chicago, a man was bragging he had never brought a cloud upon a woman's life. I said to him: 'Sir, go down on your bended knees and thank Almighty God for it.'"

She had listened, at first rather sceptically. But gradually his earnestness had convinced her of his sincerity. She had loved him, as she had understood love in those far-off days, when her young shadowed nature had expanded like a plant to the light. A little tenderness remained, called from forgotten depths to the surface. She had spoken very gently to him, forgiven him, the sweeter woman prompting her.

And then he had urged marriage.

"It is what I have come to tell you, Kitty. Let me make amends for the past by devoting my life to your happiness. I am not right bad all through. I'll begin again to love you as I did when first I saw you in that white dress, among the roses of the verandah."

She had smiled, shaken her head. It

could never be. She was quite happy. He had done his part, she was satisfied with his intentions. But the amends she claimed was that he should never seek to see her again. Only on that condition, that he left Geneva at once, looking upon this as a final parting, could she give him her full, unqualified forgiveness. He had insisted, wearying her. She had risen, held out her hand to him.

"You must go. It is a generous impulse that urges you to make reparation in this manner, not love—"

She paused for a breath, instinctively trying him with a touchstone, and smiling as it failed to draw the response of passion.

"Let your conscience be easy. You wish to serve me—you have a trust—my honour—you can cherish it."

And then the element of grotesque folly, that underlay this man's nature, had prompted him to satisfy the childlike craving for plenary shrift and absolution. He told her that he had confessed in an unguarded moment to Chetwynd, taken him further into his confidence. At first she had scarcely understood him—the suggestion had stunned, paralyzed

her for a few seconds, during which his words seemed to strike her senses dimly, like rain in the night. The complete realization came with a rush—the shame, the degradation —the abyss that he had opened at her feet. Sudden overpowering hate of him had flooded her senses and burst all barriers of reserve and self-control.

He had committed the Unpardonable Sin, in a woman's eyes—the crime against her honour. To have won her, kissed her, cast her aside—that is in the heart of a woman to forgive. But not the other. He had betrayed her. Not only that, but he had stabbed to the very soul of her love. The sight of the weak man, who had added this crowning outrage to the havoc he had wrought in her life, goaded her into madness. The very tenderness, with which she had but lately regarded him, made the revulsion all the stronger.

"Oh God! I could kill you! I could kill you!" she had cried.

He had turned white to the lips, scared at the transformation of the calm, subdued woman into the fierce, quivering creature

with glittering eyes and passion-strung words. The eternal, wild, savage woman, repressed for years in the depths of her soul, had leapt out upon him to rend him in her mad anger. She had pointed to the door, stamping her foot, driven him out of her sight. At the door he had paused, and looked at her with a strange mingling of manhood and submission in his eyes.

"I deserve my punishment—but I am not all bad. And so help me God, Kitty, my offer will hold good at any moment of my life!"

He had gone. She was alone, pacing the room, still shaken with the storm of elemental fury.

At last exhaustion weakened her. She drew aside the curtain before her bed, and threw herself down shivering with the shame that was eating into her bones.

"Oh, my God!" she moaned, "Oh, my God! That he should have learned—from him—"

She drew the sides of the pillow tight about her face. It was agony of degradation. Her body shuddered at the thought of his contempt, the shattering of his faith in her,

the man's revolt at the brutality of the revelation. She had been dragged through the mire before his eyes. In her degradation she saw herself the object of his loathing.

The sharp striking of the little Swiss clock on her writing-table roused her. She raised a drawn face and looked in its direction. It was only eleven. She had thought hours had passed while she had lain there shivering. A little sense of dismay crept over her. If those few minutes had passed like hours, what would be the length of the hours themselves that had to be lived through that day?

If only she had sent him that letter, she thought bitterly. She might have fallen in his eyes, but not to those depths. He would have understood. The tremulous hope that his love would remain unclouded had sustained her. If only she could have spoken. A cynical irony seemed to govern the world.

She went to the window and looked into the street. A sudden impulse to go out of doors into the open air came over her and as quickly died away. She could not bear to

walk along the street or in the public gardens—before hundreds of human eyes. Her soul felt naked and ashamed. If it had been country, where she could have gone and hidden herself in a quiet far-off corner, and laid her face upon the grass, and let the tree-branches whisper to her alone, it would have been different. She shrank from the contact of men and women—and yet her heart sank with a despairing sense of loneliness.

The consciousness of it came with a shock, as to one, who, on a North Country fell, suddenly finds himself isolated from outer things by an impenetrable mist. She hurried away from the window, sat down, through sheer physical weariness, on the chair by her writing-table, and buried her face in her hands.

A servant brought up a note. A fearful pang shot through her that it might be from Raine. The first glance showed her Hockmaster's handwriting. The envelope bore the printed heading of one of the *cafés*.

"If you have any pity, forgive me"—it ran. "That I told you of my fault is proof of my

earnest desire to begin a new life as regards you. I would give years of my life to win a kind word from you. All that was best and straightest in me spoke to you, Kitty. I am intensely miserable."

She crumpled up the note and threw it aside. His misery indeed!

She looked at the clock. Half-past eleven. The thought came to her that all her life was to drag along at this pace, endless minutes to each hour.

The heat of her resentment against Hock-master cooled down, but the poignancy of her shame remained. The impulsive hope that had risen at the first sight of the letter left a train of new reflections. How could she ever meet Raine again?

She rose once more, and resumed her weary, restless movements about the room.

"Never, never!" she cried. "His eyes would kill me—he would be kind—Oh God! I couldn't bear it. I would rather have him curse me! I would rather have him strike me! Oh, Raine, Raine, my darling, my love! I would have told you all—and you would have judged me from my own lips. You

would not have put me from you. But this degradation—"

She was carrying death in her heart. She could not conceive the survival of his love. Men—unlike women—could not love, when once love had been turned to scorn. If they met, he would be considerate, kind, even pitiful. The thought of his contemptuous pity scorched her. The picture of him rose before her, frank, generous, honourable. She stopped short, as an agitating possibility occurred to her.

Might not quixotism lead him to renew his offer?

The idea haunted her, and gathering strength from her knowledge and her idealized conception of his nature, grew into a conviction. For a moment she gave herself up to the temptation of taking him at his word. She loved him with every yearning fibre in her body. Without him life was an appalling waste. It would be enough for her merely to be with him, seek now and then a caress from his hand.

But then came the passionate recoil. She shuddered, put up her hands before her face.

"Never!" she cried again. "I would rather die! My ignominy in his eyes is eternal. It would drag him down. He is too good to have a millstone like that tied around his neck."

Yet the longing swept through her again, and her mind swayed to and fro. The hours crept on. She refused an offer of food made her by the servant. She felt as if it would choke her. She would ring if she wanted any later.

What was she to do? Her aching head throbbed as if it would burst. Hockmaster's note met her glance. She read it again. And this time she smoothed it out and replaced it slowly on the table. Her anger was dulled by despair. Nothing remained of her vehement indignation. It was the back-swing of the pendulum.

What was she to do? Raine she could never meet face to face. Yet the whole woman in her yearned to meet him. She must cut herself adrift, vanish wholly from his life. Destiny seemed to point out the course she must follow. She sat down, her chin in her hands, brooding over it until the

sense of fatefulness numbed her mind. Fate had brought her back this other from the dark back ward of time. He had changed her life once. Was it not meant that he should fulfil the work he had begun? She must marry him. Raine would be saved. It would be a life of sadness, self-sacrifice. But then women were born for it.

Like many another woman, she was driven by an hour's despair to commit herself to a life-long unhappiness. She had counted the cost, and, unlike a man, blindly resolved to pay it. It is part of a woman's nature to trust herself to the irreparable. Katherine went to her table and wrote two letters—one to each man. The pen flew quickly, her intelligence illuminated by a false light. She sealed them, rang the bell, despatched them by the servant. It was done. She had burned her ships, committed herself irrevocably. A period of dull calm followed, during which she pretended to eat some food that she ordered, and read unintelligently an article in a review. But at last the words swam before her eyes. The review fell to

the ground. The agony of her life came upon her, and she broke down utterly.

Felicia in the next room was humming an air. She had returned from her walk with Raine and was taking off her things. If she had been called upon suddenly to name the air, it would have slipped like a waking dream from her memory. The mingled altruistic and personal feelings of the past two hours had lifted her into an exalted mood, which was not altogether joyous. She was passing through one of those rare moments, when a young impressionable girl lives spiritually, without definite consciousness of personal needs, in a certain music of the soul. A sexual manifestation transcendentalized, if one pushes inquiry to the root of things. The magic of her sex had drawn the pain from a strong man's eyes and had touched his inner self.

Suddenly a sound struck upon her ear and the song died upon her lips. She listened, puzzled. It came again, a moan and a choking sob. Already somewhat over-wrought, she held her breath, instinctively

seeking some clue of association. She grasped it with a rush of emotion. Once she had heard that cry before, from a woman's depths, on the evening of poor little Miss Bunter's tragedy.

It was Katherine, on the other side of the wooden partition, crying her heart out. Fibres within the girl were strangely stirred, filling her with a great, yearning pity. At some moments of their lives women can touch the stars. Moved by an uncontrollable impulse she went out, knocked at Katherine's door and entered.

Katherine rose, looked at her half-bewildered; then the magnetism of the sympathy in Felicia's eyes and impulsively outstretched arms attracted her involuntarily. She made a step forward, and, with a little cry, half-sob, half-welcome, gave herself up to Felicia's clasp.

"I heard you. I had to come," said Felicia. Katherine did not reply. For a long time they sat together without speaking, the elder woman's misery turned to sadness by the sweet and sudden tenderness. She cried softly in the girl's arms.

"It was good of you to come," she said at last. "I had broken down—utterly broken down."

"I felt it," answered Felicia gently. She smoothed Katherine's ruffled fair hair with a light touch and kissed her forehead.

"It will come right in time, dear."

But Katherine shook her head.

"Some things are final, irrevocable. The sun goes out of one's heart for ever and ever."

"Could I do nothing for you? Practically I mean. You see, I know—a word—it might be in my power—"

She hesitated, touching upon delicate ground. Katherine lifted a tear-stained face, and looked at her curiously.

"You love him—and yet you would help me?"

"Because he loves you, dear," said Felicia. "And because it has come upon me that I have been doing you a great wrong—in thinking badly of you."

"What has made you think better of me?"

"Intuition, I suppose—and when I seemed

to realize what his love for you meant. He could only love what was worthy of him."

"That is why he can love me no more," said Katherine in a low voice.

She paused for a moment, her breath coming quickly. Then she continued hurriedly, twining her fingers in a nervous clasp: "Things have happened that make it impossible for him to care for me—I shall never see him again. I am going away this afternoon—see,"—she pointed to a dressing-bag packed, but still open, lying on the table. "And I shall pass out of his life altogether."

"But I don't understand!" cried Felicia, in grieved dismay. "What could make him cease to love you?"

"I have not been what the world calls a good woman, Felicia. God knows I have paid the penalty already—but the bitterest penalty of all is yet to be paid—the surrender of the longed-for Paradise, that only a woman who has lived as I have done can long for. Oh, my child, my dear, tender little girl, the way of the world is made hard for women sometimes."

"Why should the women always suffer?" asked Felicia.

"Why? God knows. It is life."

"If I were a man," said Felicia, with a glow in her eyes, "I would think it dastardly to let a woman suffer, if I loved her."

"There are some things that kill love," replied Katherine bitterly.

"Has Raine told you so?"

"Ah, no. He is too generous."

"Then how do you know?"

"My dear, when you leave a cut flower in the sun you know it will be withered up. There is no need for you to watch it to make sure."

"But—if he still loves you? He did last night—he did this morning."

Katherine gently laid her hand on the girl's lips.

"Hush! I told you. What I have done can't be undone."

"But you love him, Katherine," Felicia burst out impetuously.

"Don't you see I am signing my death-warrant?" cried Katherine.

Her voice vibrated and she looked at Felicia with shining eyes—"I shall love him till I die, as the best and wisest man of men that has ever walked the earth."

She rose, crossed the room, came back and laid her hands upon Felicia's shoulders, and looked into her young, wondering eyes.

"Dear," she said, "I shall always remember what you have done for me to-day. When you came in, I thought my heart was broken—but your tenderness stole over me like a charm—and now you see I can talk quite sensibly, and smile, just like my own self again. You must bid me good-bye, dear. I must go soon. But what I want to tell you is this. Think kindly of me—ah, don't you cry, child—there has been enough of tears to-day—think of me, dear, as a sister-woman, who stepped aside once out of the beaten track and for whom fate has been too much. And, Felicia dear, when I am gone —it will take very, very little to make Raine love you—"

"Ah, no!" cried Felicia passionately.

But Katherine smiled her sad, self-controlled smile.

"Ah, yes! He cannot help loving you—and so God give you happiness."

"I can't bear you to go like this. I can't bear it!" cried Felicia.

"We all have to work out our destiny," said Katherine. "Now good-bye, dear—God bless you."

A few moments later, Katherine was alone again, finishing her preparations for departure.

CHAPTER XVI.

FELICIA VICTRIX.

"WHAT you have learned about me," Katherine had written to Raine, "I was to have told you last night. I had written to you a long letter, but I was too weak to send it. I resolved to tell it to your own ears. But it was impossible for me to speak to you last night for I was suffering too much.

"My story is a simple one. Married to a man many years my senior—treated with a mild gravity which my girlish wilfulness took for harshness—a great many tears—a great longing for the tenderness that never came—a gay, buoyant nature meeting mine, changing, it seemed, my twilight into sunshine—and then—what you know.

"Do not judge me harshly, Raine. But forget me. Forget that I came and troubled your life. Even were my name free from blemish,

I am not good enough to be your wife. Forget me, and take to your heart one who will make you happier than I could have done—one younger, sweeter, purer. And she loves you. Let her win you.

"I have suffered much to be able to write this. It is a farewell. To meet you would be too great pain for us both. This morning, as you know, I saw Mr. Hockmaster, and I have promised to marry him. Fate rules these things for us. To the day of my death I shall pray for your happiness.—K.S."

Raine's face grew hard as he read the letter. A man quickly wearies of successive emotions. His self-pride asserts itself and makes him rebel against falling into weaknesses of feeling. He had been angry at allowing himself to be drawn towards Felicia, and a natural reaction of loyalty to Katherine had followed. Now this was checked by her calm, unimpassioned words and the astounding intelligence of her engagement to Hockmaster. He was completely staggered. To his dismay, he became conscious of an awful void in his life. It seemed to be filled with purposeless shadows. He set his teeth and

wrapped his strong man's pride about him. The thought of himself as John a' Dreams was a lash to his spirit. He crumpled up the paper in his hands and strode to and fro in his room.

She was to marry Hockmaster. It was incredible, preposterous, except on one hypothesis—the recrudescence of the old passion that had swept aside the social barriers for this man's sake. It was the most galling thought of all, it racked him, drew him down to a lower plane of feeling, blinded his clear insight into delicate things. Perhaps if a man did not sink lower than himself on some occasions, he could not rise higher than himself on others.

He drew a chair to the open French window. The room, being on the top storey, had no balcony, but a wrought-iron balustrade fixed on the outside of the jambs. He leant his arms over it and looked into the familiar street. He hated it. Geneva was intolerable. As soon as his father was able to travel, he would shake the dust of it from off his feet. A bantering letter had come that morning from his cousin, Mrs. Monteith, at Oxford. A



"I have told Felicia. Do you mind?"

phrase or two passed through his mind. Was he going to bring back two brides or half a one?

"How damned vulgar women can be at times!" he exclaimed angrily, and he rose with impatience from his chair, as if to drive Mrs. Monteith from his thoughts.

He unrolled Katherine's crumpled letter and read it through again. Then he thrust it into his pocket and decided to go and sit with his father.

But, before he could reach the door, a knock was heard. He opened it, and to his surprise found Felicia.

"You—is my father—?"

"No. I want to speak to you. Can I?"

"Do you mind coming in? It is not very untidy."

He held the door for her to pass in, then he closed it and came up to her enquiringly. Felicia stood in the middle of the room, with her hands behind her back, a favourite attitude. Her dark cheeks were flushed and her sensitive lips were parted, quivering slightly.

"It's about Katherine!" she burst out

suddenly. "Please let me talk, or I shall not be able to say what I want to. Since last night—when you kissed me—I have thought I might come to you—as your sister might—and because I care for you like that, I feel I can tell you. I have just been with Katherine. She is going away this afternoon."

"At once?" asked Raine, startled at the apparent rapidity of events.

"Yes. Are you sending her away?"

"I? Oh no."

"But why must she go, Raine? Tell me; need she go?"

"Katherine is mistress of her own actions."

"Then you don't care?"

She looked at him earnestly, with moist eyes. There was a note of passion in her voice, to which Raine, sympathetic, found himself responding.

"What is the use of my caring, since she is going of her own accord without a word from me?"

"But a word from you would make her stay."

"What do you know about all this?" he asked abruptly.

"I know that you have broken her heart," said Felicia. "Oh! knowing her—and loving her—it is hard not to forgive."

"There is no question of forgiveness," replied Raine. "Did she tell you I would not forgive her?"

"No. A woman does not need to be *told* these things—she knows them and feels them. Must a woman always, always, always suffer? Why can't a man be great and noble sometimes—like Christ who forgave?"

"But, my dear child, you are talking wildly," cried Raine earnestly. "God knows there is nothing to forgive. I knew long ago a shadow had been cast over her life—and I loved her. A strange freak of destiny brought the man here—last night, accidentally, he told me the details—and I loved her. I have not seen her. It is not I who drive her away. Read that, and you can see it is not I."

He thrust the letter into her hand, and watched her as she read. Four-and-twenty hours ago, he would as soon have thought of crying his heart's secrets aloud in the public streets, as of delivering them into the

keeping of this young girl. But now it seemed natural. Her exalted mood had infected him, lifted him on to an unconventional plane.

The blood rushed to her cheeks as she read the lines in which reference was made to herself. When she had finished, she looked at him with a strange light in her eyes.

"And you are satisfied with this?" she said quickly.

"I am dumfounded by it. She has promised to marry this man."

"And can't you see why? Isn't it as clear to you as the noonday?"

"The old love is stronger, I suppose."

"Raine!" cried the girl, in ringing reproach. "How dare you say that, think it even? Can't you see the agony that letter has cost her? To me it is quivering in every line. Why did you let that man go to her instead of yourself? Oh, heavens! if I were a man, and such a thing had happened regarding the woman I loved, I should have lain outside her door all night to guard her—I should have seen her, if

hell-fire had been between us. But you let her suffer. You put your pride above your love, like a man—you were silent. You let her hear from this man that you knew—you left her to grapple with her shame alone."

Felicia walked about the room like a young lioness. The words came in a flood. In the championing of her sister-woman she lost sense of conventional restrictions. Raine was no longer Raine, but the typefication of a sex against which she was battling for her own.

"Can't you read into it all?" she continued. "Can't you see the degradation she seemed to have fallen into in your eyes? But you only think of yourself—of *your* pride—of the bloom brushed off from *your* ideal. Never a thought for her—of the god hurled from her heaven. She would marry this man to cut herself adrift from you, to get out of your life without further troubling it—to ease your conscience, lest it should ever prick you for having left her. She is marrying him because her heart is broken—who else but a noble, high-souled woman

could have written this letter? I better than she! Oh, Raine—if you have a spark of love for her left—go and throw yourself at her knees, before it is too late."

Her voice broke towards the end. The strain was telling on her. She sank for rest upon the chair by the window, and laid her burning cheek against the iron balustrade. Raine came to her side.

"You can thrash me a little more, if you like."

But the familiar, kindly tone suddenly awoke Felicia to the sense of their relations. She hung her head, confused.

"Forgive me," she said. "I ought not to have spoken like that to you—I lost control over myself. You mustn't think of what I have said."

"I'll think of it all through my life, Felicia," said Raine.

A silence fell upon them. The girl was shaken and weary. Raine was confronting a new hope, that made his heart beat.

"Raine," she said, after a while.

He did not reply. She looked up, and saw him staring into the street.

"By God!" he cried, suddenly, and before Felicia could realize what he was doing, he had seized his hat from the table and had rushed from the room, leaving the door open.

Felicia leant over the balustrade, and looked down. Katherine was there, near the corner, in the act of giving over her dressing-bag to a lad in a blue blouse, who had offered his services. Felicia watched until she saw Raine emerge beneath the archway, stride like a man possessed after Katherine, catch her up, and lay his hand upon her arm, as she turned a startled face towards him. Then the tears came into her eyes, and she left the window and went down to her own room, where she locked herself in and cried miserably. Such is the apparently inconsequent way of women.

"Katherine," said Raine, when he came up with her. She stopped, and looked at him speechlessly.

"I have just caught you in time," he said, with masculine brusqueness. "We must talk together. Come into the Gardens."

"I can't," she replied, hurriedly. "My train—"

"You can miss your train. Where are you going?"

"Lausanne," she answered, weakly, with lowered eyes.

"There are quantities of trains. Come."

He drew her arm gently. She obeyed, powerless to resist. He found a seat away from the promenade. An old peasant was dozing at one end, and a mongrel was stretched at his feet. They were practically alone. The old man in his time had seen many English and innumerable pairs of lovers. Neither interested him. He did not even deign to turn a lustreless eye in their direction. The boy with the dressing-bag had meekly followed them, and stood by, politely, cap in hand. Did madame want him to wait with the bag?

"No," replied Raine, pulling a franc from his pocket. "Take it to the *concierge* at the Pension Boccard."

Katherine half rose, agitated.

"No, no. I must go to Lausanne. You mustn't keep me."

But the boy had dashed off, clutching his franc-piece. Raine bent down till the ends of his moustache nearly brushed her veil.

"I will keep you, Katherine, until you tell me you love me no longer."

"Don't torture me," she said, piteously. "That is why I tried to avoid meeting—to spare us both. I knew your generosity."

"My generosity," echoed Raine, with effective interruption. "My longing, my needs, the happiness of my life! If you care for me, it is not torturing you to tell you I love you—I can't live a man's life without you. When I first read your letter, it crushed the soul out of me. I did not understand; afterwards I did. Some day you shall learn how. I love you, Katherine, need you, yearn for you."

His passion grew as he looked at her, watching the faint colour come and go on the face beneath the veil. She seemed too fragile and delicate for the rude buffetings of the world. An immense wave of emotion swept through him. It was his indefeasible right to protect her, cherish her, hold her in his arms, close to him.

And Katherine was trembling, every chord in her vibrated. She could not speak. She flashed on him a quick, sidelong, feminine

glance, and met his eyes fixed upon her. They were blue and strong, half-fierce, half-tender. The man's will and longing were in them. She shrank, and yet she looked again, loving him for their intensity. Raine spoke on as he had never known it had been in his power to speak. The old peasant dozed, regardless of their presence or of that of a little dusty child who squatted down by him to play with the dog. Through the trees and shrubs in front could be seen glimpses of white dresses, scraps of the passers-by on the path along the quay. But this quiet, somewhat unkempt corner remained undisturbed.

"I can't, I can't," said Katherine, at last. "I have pledged myself—I can't go back."

"I will settle that matter," he replied, with a half smile. "Leave it to me. Men understand one another. You are mine, Katherine, my darling, mine, my wife—if you love me."

The tenderness of his voice thrilled through her. She raised her eyes to his, this time to be held there.

"Love you!"

He read her lips rather than heard them.

"And nothing again shall part us? You will marry me, Katherine?"

All the woman in her cried "yes," but it also held her back.

"Will you love me in after years as now, Raine? Will you never come to think that this shame that has come to me was deserved? Think of it, dear, in your clear, honest way. You will never come to feel that you have given all your wealth for what, like most men, you should have trodden under foot? Your life's happiness—mine—depend upon your answering it from your heart of hearts, dear. Judge me now for ever and ever."

"As God hears me," said Raine, with the love in his voice. "To me you are ever the purest and the noblest and tenderest of women. You love me with a woman's love and I with a man's; and we will love soul to soul, dear, till we die. Our love, dear, is as sacred to me as the ghost I buried in it a few weeks ago. All this will be like a troubled dream—all the past, darling, in both our lives as shadows. Thank God!"

He put his arms suddenly round her, drew her to him, and kissed her. For both

of them the world stood still, and the commonplace gardens were Eden, and the old peasant nodded his weatherbeaten head, and the mongrel and the dusty child looked on unastonished, like the beasts when the first apple was eaten.

Raine went, an hour or so after, to the Hôtel National and found Hockmaster outside, cultivating a dinner appetite with sherry and bitters. He jumped up when he perceived his visitor, and came towards him.

"Hello, Chetwynd! This is real friendly of you. Come and sit down—join me."

Raine accepted the seat, but declined the sherry.

"Do you mind my asking you a very intimate question?" asked Raine.

"As many as you like," said Hockmaster, with naïve effusion. "I have given you a sort of right to be familiar. Of course, whether I answer it is a matter for my discretion."

"Precisely. But I hope you will. Are your feelings very deeply engaged in this affair with Mrs. Stapleton?"

"Sir," said Hockmaster. "I've repaired

a wrong that has set at rest a damned uneasy conscience."

"From which I gather you have obeyed your conscience rather than your heart," said Raine.

"I am going to be married," replied Hockmaster, between the first puffs of a cigar he was lighting. "Perhaps you may not know that. So I guess I'd better fall back upon discretion. It is best in affairs between man and wife."

"Yes, but suppose it was broken off?"

"What? My marriage?"

He stretched himself out in a comfortable attitude, his hands behind his head, and regarded Raine placidly.

"What sort of interest can the concerns of a worm like me have for you?"

"Every interest in the world," replied Raine, flushing. "If it's merely a question of conscience on your part, I have no scruple in asking you to release Mrs. Stapleton from her engagement."

"Did she send you?"

"Yes."

"Tell you any reason?"

Hockmaster's tone irritated Raine. He rose quickly, thrusting his straw hat to the back of his head, and stood over the recumbent American, with his hands on his hips.

"Yes, she did. Mrs. Stapleton is going to marry *me*."

The words brought the other to his feet with a force that nearly upset the small table in front of him.

"God alive, man!" he cried, realizing the whole situation in a rush. "Why on earth didn't you tell me before?"

The two men looked into one another's eyes. It was Raine who was first disconcerted. The intense distress of the other was too genuine for him not to feel touched.

"You're the first man for years," said Hockmaster, "that I have felt drawn to in friendship; and I have been powerfully drawn to you. I would have cut off my head sooner than said or done anything to pain you. Why didn't you stop me this morning?"

"I tried to dissuade you."

Hockmaster threw away his extinct cigar, and put his hands in his pockets dejectedly.

"Yes, you did so; and I went on

running knives into you. Why didn't you pitch me into the lake last night? I wish to God you'd do it now."

"We will forget all that," said Raine, kindly.

"You may, but I shan't. And she—for heaven's sake, ask her to forgive me. I was trying to do my best. You believe that, don't you?"

"With all my heart," said Raine.

"And I'll tell you, Chetwynd," continued Hockmaster, with a truer ring of feeling in his voice than Raine had ever perceived, "I meant to be a good man to her, to put down my cloak over every puddle in life for her to walk upon, to make her just as happy as I could. But I guess I've been a blamed fool. I've been a blamed fool all my life. First thing I remember was running away from school to live in the woods. At first it was glorious. Then it rained all night, and I crawled back next morning sick and miserable, and was put to bed for a month. I reckon I'll go home. My White Lead Company's going to burst like all the other bubbles. I heard this morning. An hour ago I thought,

'Anyway, I've found a good friend and a wife in Europe.' Now that's gone. But she'll be happy. You're worth twenty million of me. You won't see me again. I suppose I'm the sorriest man standing on the earth at the present moment; but you won't think worse of me than I am, will you?"

He looked sideways at Raine, in his odd, appealing way.

"Upon my soul," cried Raine, in an outburst of generous feeling, grasping him by the shoulder, "I don't know whether you are not one of the most lovable men I have ever met!"

Raine walked back to the pension with love in his heart towards all mankind. God was in his heaven. All was right with the world.

He found Katherine and Felicia in the salon waiting for dinner, in company with Mme. Popea and Frau Schultz. Mme. Popea cried out on seeing him,—

"Another happy one! What has made you all look so beatified?"

"The eternal beauty of humanity," returned Raine, with a smile.

"And you have caught the plague of epigrams," said Frau Schultz. "I asked Miss Graves why she had such a colour, and she said, 'because the world seemed wider to-day.' It's a new language."

"It is the turn of madame," said Mme. Popea, in her vivacious way.

Katherine laughed.

"This is not a parlour game, you know. But perhaps it is because I am going to dine."

Raine's heart leapt at the little touch of gaiety. His eyes showed her his gladness. A stream of the other guests entered. She took advantage of the sudden filling of the salon to draw him to her side. A glance asked a tremulous question. He reassured her with a whisper, and they went out on to the balcony.

"I have told my father," said Raine. "He will love you, dear."

She pressed his arm for answer. There was a long silence, which Raine, half divining her mood, would not break. At last he said, lover-wise,—

"Tell me your thoughts, beloved."

"I was thinking that I have lived thirty-one years, and I have never known till now

what even freedom from care was. I seemed blinded by the light, like the prisoners let out from the Bastille. There is something awful in such happiness."

"It shall be with you to the end," said Raine.

"I know it," she replied.

Then, after a pause,—

"I have told Felicia. Do you mind?"

"We owe her a great debt," said Raine. "She came to me this afternoon, after leaving you."

The blood rose in Katherine's cheeks, and she looked up timidly into his face.

"I think I shall bring her here to you. You will know what to say to her."

She disappeared for a moment by the open window, and then returned with Felicia, whom she left with Raine. He came forward, and took both her hands in his.

"How can I ever repay you?"

"You have done too much for me already," said Felicia.

There was a little combat of generous words.

The dinner-gong sounded the end of the talk.

"And the Pension Boccard," he said; "you will have some pleasant memories of it?"

"Ah, yes. I owe too much to it."

"How?" asked Raine.

"You may think it an odd thing to say, but it seems to have changed me from a girl into a woman."

"Does that bring you happiness?"

"I don't know," replied Felicia, musingly.

And then, after a pause,—

"I think so."

THE END.

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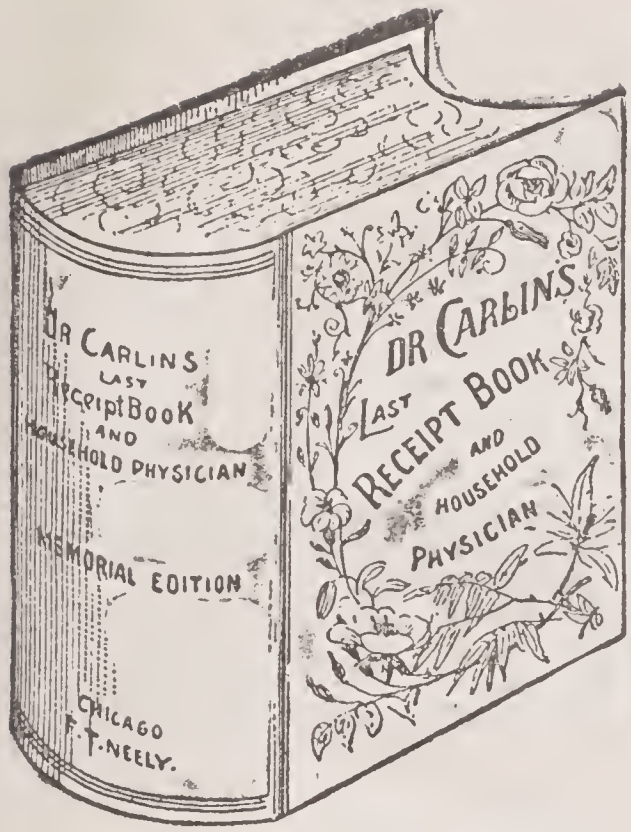
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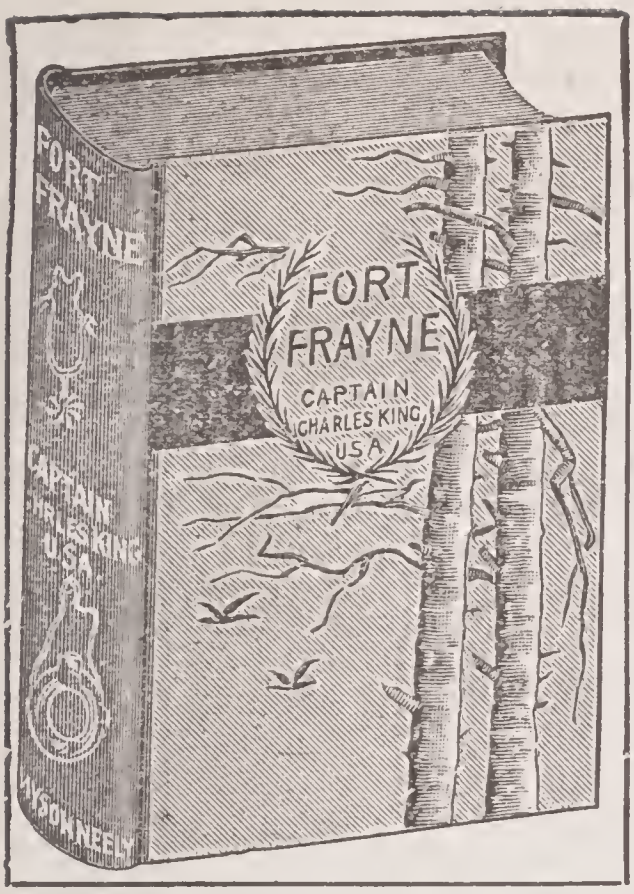
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